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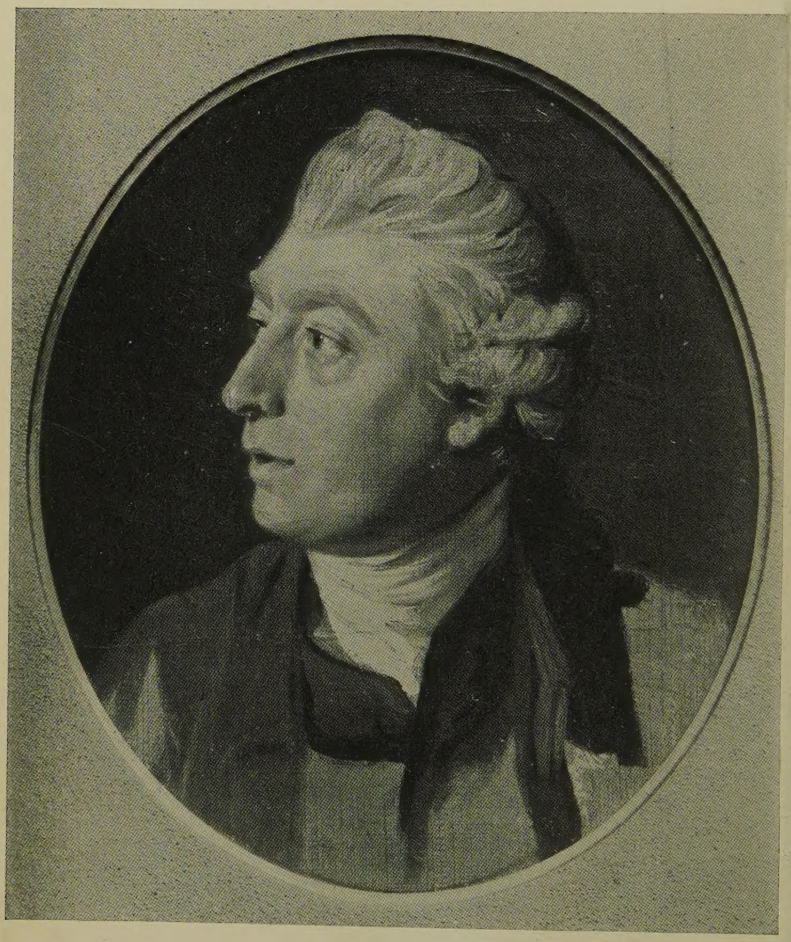

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, R.A.

From the portrait by Zoffany in the National Gallery

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

BY

WILLIAM T. WHITLEY

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

Gibson Library

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TO

L. R.

FOR WHOSE INVALUABLE HELP I AM
DEEPLY INDEBTED

PREFACE

THERE is no painter of English birth more widely appreciated than Gainsborough, whose art touches every observer, great and simple, learned and unlearned. "As we look at his pictures," said Constable, "we find tears in our eyes and know not what brings them." A thread of romance runs through the whole of Gainsborough's career, from his marriage to a beautiful and well-dowered bride whose origin is shrouded in mystery, down to the pathetic termination of the long years of jealous rivalry with Reynolds. And romance and mystery are inseparably connected with his pictures—with the portraits of that Duchess of Devonshire, whom tradition has brought us to regard as typical of English beauty; with that masterpiece at Edinburgh, the portrait of Mrs. Graham, hidden from sight for fifty years on account of one of the tenderest of love stories; and with the famous *Blue Boy*, the secret of whose history still remains undiscovered.

Gainsborough charms us all, and we are interested in everything that concerns him. The mere rumour of the finding of some long hidden or forgotten painting from his hand is sufficient to fill the papers with articles and paragraphs, and yet he has attracted less attention from modern biographers than any artist of his rank. He has not been neglected, for many ably written books on Gainsborough have been published in our generation, but in none of them has any serious attempt been made to throw new light upon his career. Most of his biographers seem to have assumed that little or nothing new could be discovered about him, and that the only

thing to be done was to re-arrange the existing material to the best advantage. Hence the noticeable resemblance to one another of the modern books upon the great Suffolk painter, in which the already familiar anecdotes are retold with but slight alteration.

The lack of research and the consequent absence of new material are frankly admitted by one of the later biographers of Gainsborough, Lord Ronald Gower. "Although," he says, "some elaborately illustrated lives have appeared during the last few years, they contain little beyond the facts given by Fulcher. . . . His life of Gainsborough, although only a booklet which can be read through in a couple of hours, is the most complete account we possess of one of our greatest painters, and from it all the material of his later biographies has been gleaned." Lord Ronald's statement is substantially, but not entirely accurate, for Gainsborough's letters to William Jackson had not been found when Fulcher wrote his book in 1855, and these have been available to the modern biographers as well as a few other letters that have come to light in auction rooms, or have been unearthed by the labours of the Historical Commission. However, apart from these letters and some odd notes, the recent books contain very little that is not to be found in Fulcher, and in Fulcher the gaps are very large indeed, for his research was on a limited scale, except in the neighbourhood of Gainsborough's birthplace.

George Williams Fulcher, whose little book has been used so extensively by succeeding biographers, was a native of Sudbury in Suffolk, and therefore the fellow-townsman of Gainsborough. A bookseller and printer, he was a man of literary tastes and apparently of considerable reading, who, towards the close of his life devoted much of his leisure to collecting materials for a memoir of the great painter, of whom at that time there was no real biography in existence. Fulcher gathered together

such local tradition and gossip as he could trace after so long an interval, for he did not begin to write until more than a century after Gainsborough had left Sudbury. His book also contains some letters of great interest that are to be found nowhere else, but most of his material has been gleaned from easily accessible sources. Fulcher's chief authorities were Philip Thicknesse, sometime Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort, Harwich, whose *Sketch of the Life and Painting of Thomas Gainsborough, Esq.* was published in 1788; Horace Walpole; William Jackson of Exeter; Allan Cunningham's life of the artist, published in 1829; Garrick's correspondence; and the articles on Gainsborough printed in 1788 in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *European Magazine.*

The present volume is in the main the fruit of long research in fields untouched by Fulcher, and in writing it no attempt has been made to add to the already considerable volume of literature that deals with Gainsborough's work from the critical standpoint. My efforts have not been directed towards criticism, but to the discovery of new facts about the career of Gainsborough, of which so little has been known hitherto that even the dates given to his pictures in the National Gallery catalogue are conjectural, with the exception of that assigned to *The Baillie Family.* From various sources I have been fortunate enough to gather a large amount of fresh information about Gainsborough, and the greater part of this book is composed of material that is not to be found in any preceding biography of the artist.

Among the new information about Sudbury will be found Gainsborough's own statement of the reason that induced his father to send him to London to study art. The notes on the Ipswich period include many facts about the Gainsborough family unrecorded until now; some account of Gainsborough's friends and surroundings at Ipswich; the identification of the site of his house

and a brief description of the house itself; and the discovery of the long disputed date of the departure for Bath.

In the four chapters on Bath some light is thrown on Gainsborough's life in that city. The story is told of his quarrel with a minor poet, about a portrait, which nearly brought the disputants to a duel; and among many other things new information is given about Garrick's portrait at Stratford, the history of which has always been obscure. Reasons are given for doubting whether Gainsborough ever lived at No. 24, The Circus; and the assertion of Thicknesse questioned, that he was the means of driving Gainsborough from Bath to settle in London.

Of Gainsborough's life in London, the most brilliant and interesting portion of his career, Fulcher's account is of the scantiest, and of some years nothing is recorded. A few letters and scraps of gossip, the titles of the pictures exhibited between 1777 and 1783, and brief accounts of Gainsborough's quarrel with the Academy in 1784, and of his funeral in 1788, practically cover Fulcher's information concerning this remarkable period.

Fortunately most of my new material is connected with London, and it enables me to tell the story of Gainsborough's professional life with some fulness, especially in the later years. The courtesy of the Royal Academy in giving me the almost unprecedented privilege of examining the Council minutes has resulted in the discovery of fresh evidence concerning the artist's relations and quarrels with the Forty; but my principal sources of information about Gainsborough in London have been the notes written by the Reverend Henry Bate (the "Fighting Parson"), afterwards Sir Henry Bate-Dudley. Bate, one of the founders of the *Morning Post*, and later the proprietor of the *Morning Herald*, was the champion of Gainsborough through all the last ten or twelve years

of his life. His admiration for the painter amounted almost to worship, and in the *Morning Herald* he chronicled the progress of Gainsborough's pictures and supported him against the Academy and against everyone who dared to question his artistic supremacy. To Bate I owe most of the descriptions in these pages of Gainsborough's private exhibitions, held at Schomberg House from 1784 to 1788; and of the final exhibition and sale of pictures at the same place a year after his death. Many of the anecdotes that I give about Gainsborough and his friends originated with Bate, whose intimacy with the artist is not referred to by preceding biographers. Bate is mentioned by some of them, but only as a sitter for the portrait that is now in the collection of Lady Burton.

Nor is there a record in any biography of Gainsborough of the private exhibitions just mentioned, at which many of his finest pictures were shown, sometimes in various stages of completion. Bate's intimate (and possibly inspired) notes on the pictures shown in Gainsborough's studio have helped me to find the dates, hitherto unknown, of a number of canvases. Among these are the famous *Mrs. Robinson* in the Wallace Collection, and the *Mrs. Siddons*, *The Market Cart*, and the *Wood Scene*, *Village of Cornard*, at the National Gallery. The information about the last-named work, given in a letter from Gainsborough to Bate, is of exceptional interest, as it proves that the painting of this landscape, commenced when the artist was a schoolboy, was the first important step in his career.

Other pictures of which the dates, and occasionally particulars concerning the painting, are now given for the first time, include *The Mall, St. James's Park*; the *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*; the *Wood Gatherers* (in Lord Carnarvon's collection); the *Cottage Children with the Ass*; the *Beggar Boys*; and the *Lavinia*. Among the portraits whose dates I have found are those of

Mrs. Sheridan (Lord Rothschild's full-length), Lady Horatia Waldegrave, Lord Alexander Hamilton, Lord Archibald Hamilton, the Duke of Norfolk, Lady Sheffield, Mrs. Douglas, Lady Bate-Dudley, the Marsham Family, Mrs. Pujet, Lady Basset, Lady Mendip, and Sir Peter Burrell, afterwards Lord Gwydyr.

Nothing has been said before of Gainsborough's adventure with the highwayman, or of the misunderstanding with the Academy in 1783 about Lady Horatia Waldegrave's portrait, an incident that paved the way for the final rupture of 1784. Full particulars of these affairs are given, as well as of the dispute about the hanging of the *Three Eldest Princesses*, which brought Gainsborough's connection with the Academy to a close. Some of the contemporary remarks on this dispute suggest that its origin was political and connected with the famous Westminster election of the period. One of the best known stories about Gainsborough, that of his defacement of a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire ("Your Grace is too hard for me"), is contradicted on the authority of Bate. Some new information is given about other portraits of the Duchess by Gainsborough; and in Chapter VIII is described for the first time the sensation caused by the exhibition at the Royal Academy of the portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Graham.

Some curious particulars, until now unpublished, will be found in Chapter XVIII, of the sales held by the Gainsborough family in 1797 and 1799 for the purpose of disposing of the remaining works of the painter, and of his books and other personal property. On one of these occasions *The Housemaid*, now at the National Gallery, was sold for four guineas and a half. In the same chapter is included a sketch of the life of that shadowy personage, Gainsborough Dupont, Gainsborough's nephew and only assistant, of whose professional career little has been recorded before beyond the fact that he painted the *Merchant Elder Brethren* at Trinity House.

Gainsborough's letters to William Jackson of Exeter, now in the possession of the Royal Academy, are given in the Appendix, which also contains, among other information, a description by his contemporary, Ozias Humphry, R.A., of Gainsborough's method of painting portraits in a subdued light, and some notes on his hitherto unidentified friend and correspondent, William Pearce. Most of the anecdotes in Chapter XIX are new in the sense that they are not to be found in any other book on the artist, and new also is the touching letter (p. 282) written by Gainsborough after the death of his friend Abel.

His Majesty the King has graciously permitted me to reproduce Gainsborough's group of *The Three Eldest Princesses* and the portrait of J. C. Fischer ; and I have to acknowledge with many thanks the information, or permission to reproduce pictures, kindly given to me by the Royal Academy of Arts ; the Duke of Norfolk ; the Duke of Westminster ; the Earl of Rosebery ; the Earl of Dartmouth ; the Earl of Carnarvon ; the Earl of Leicester ; the late Lord Rothschild ; Lord D'Abernon of Esher ; the Countess Feodore Gleichen ; Sir Ralph Anstruther ; Sir Audley Neeld ; Sir William Richmond, R.A. ; Mr. Hugh F. Seymour ; Mrs. Ludwig Mond ; Mr. Adolph Hirsch ; Mr. G. D. Leslie, R.A. ; Messrs. Christie, Manson & Woods ; Messrs. T. Agnew & Sons ; Messrs. Knoedler & Co. ; Mr. Walter L. Spiers of Sir John Soane's Museum ; Mr. A. W. Soward, C.B., of the Estate Duty Office ; the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon ; the Proprietors of the *Bath Journal ;* the Editor of the *East Anglian Daily Times ;* Mr. Frank Brown of Ipswich ; Mr. F. C. Gower of Ipswich ; Mr. T. Sturge Cotterell of Bath ; Mr. J. Eagleton, Clerk to the Haberdashers' Company ; Mr. W. J. Gardner, Clerk to the Drapers' Company ; Sir Henry Trueman Wood, Secretary of the Royal Society of Arts ; Mr. John Hunt, Town Clerk of Westminster ; Messrs. Charles Hoare & Co. (Gainsborough's bankers) ; Mr. Frederick D. Wardle,

Town Clerk of Bath; Mr. H. S. Liesching of Trinity House; and by Messrs. Cassell & Co., who have allowed me to use the letter from Gainsborough quoted in Chapter VI, and printed originally in *Richard Redgrave, R.A., a Memoir.*

W. T. W.

September 1915.

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	EARLY DAYS AT SUDBURY AND IPSWICH	1
II.	BATH, 1760–1766	28
III.	BATH, 1767–1768	48
IV.	BATH, 1769–1771	65
V.	BATH, 1772–1774	84
VI.	LONDON, 1774–1776	106
VII.	THE REVEREND HENRY BATE	127
VIII.	LONDON, 1777–1779	141
IX.	LONDON, 1780–1781	161
X.	LONDON, 1782	179
XI.	LONDON, 1783	194
XII.	LONDON, 1784	212
XIII.	LONDON, 1785	234
XIV.	LONDON, 1786	253
XV.	LONDON, 1787	269
XVI.	LONDON, 1788	296
XVII.	THE SALE AT SCHOMBERG HOUSE	319
XVIII.	GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT	335
XIX.	NOTES AND ANECDOTES	354
XX.	THE BLUE BOY	372
	APPENDIX	379
	INDEX	399

ILLUSTRATIONS

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH . . . . . *Frontispiece*
By J. ZOFFANY, R.A., *from the Portrait in the National Gallery.*

TO FACE PAGE

PLAN OF PART OF IPSWICH, SHOWING MR. CRAIGHTON'S GARDEN 12
By J. GROVE, 1761.

PLAN OF THE PARISH OF ST. MARY KEY, IPSWICH, SHOWING GAINSBOROUGH'S HOUSE IN FOUNDATION STREET MARKED WITH A WHITE CROSS 21
From PENNINGTON'S *Map of* 1778.

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTERS, MARGARET AND MARY . . 27
From the painting by GAINSBOROUGH *in the Victoria and Albert Museum.*

GENERAL HONYWOOD 44
By GAINSBOROUGH.

DAVID GARRICK 67
By GAINSBOROUGH, *from the portrait at Stratford-on-Avon.*

CAPTAIN WADE 77
By GAINSBOROUGH.

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTER MARY (MRS. FISCHER) . . 122
From an unfinished portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the collection of Mr. Adolph Hirsch.*

THE REVEREND HENRY BATE (SIR HENRY BATE DUDLEY) 131
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the National Gallery.*

THE HON. MRS. GRAHAM 146
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the National Gallery of Scotland.*

JOHN CHRISTIAN FISCHER 163
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the Royal Collection.*

MRS. ROBINSON ("PERDITA") 181
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the Wallace Collection.*

TO FACE PAGE

LADY HORATIA WALDEGRAVE 205
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the collection of Mr. Hugh F. Seymour.*

THE ELDEST PRINCESSES 213
From the portrait group by GAINSBOROUGH *in the Royal Collection.*

THE MALL, ST. JAMES'S PARK 229
From the picture by GAINSBOROUGH *in the collection of Sir Audley Neeld.*

MRS. SIDDONS 236
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the National Gallery.*

MRS. SHERIDAN 265
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in Lord Rothschild's collection.*

THE MARKET CART 273
From the picture by GAINSBOROUGH *in the National Gallery.*

THE WOODMAN 285
From the engraving by SIMON *after Gainsborough's picture.*

WOOD SCENE, VILLAGE OF CORNARD, SUFFOLK (GAINSBOROUGH'S FOREST) 298
From the picture by GAINSBOROUGH *in the National Gallery.*

ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS 328
By MURILLO, *from the picture in the collection of Mrs. Ludwig Mond.*

GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT 345
From the portrait by GAINSBOROUGH *in the collection of Lord D'Abernon of Esher.*

THE BOY AT THE STILE 365
From the painting by GAINSBOROUGH *in the collection of Sir Ralph Anstruther.*

THE BLUE BOY 372
From the painting by GAINSBOROUGH *in the collection of the Duke of Westminster.*

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THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH

CHAPTER I

EARLY DAYS AT SUDBURY AND IPSWICH

The painter's birthplace—"Born in a mill"—Sudbury and the Gainsboroughs—The last survivor—Gainsborough's boyhood—Commencement of the *Cornard Wood* picture—It induces his father to send him to London—He works for Gravelot—The St. Martin's Lane Academy—Gainsborough not the pupil of Hayman—A self-taught artist—He returns to Sudbury—The story of Mr. Fonnereau and £300—Gainsborough's marriage to Margaret Burr—An unsympathetic union—The bride's relations in Edinburgh, London, and Glasgow—Eighteenth-century Ipswich—Philip Thicknesse—The "Tom Peartree" legend—The *Ipswich Journal*—Joshua Kirby and Andrew Baldrey—Gainsborough's house at Ipswich—Its situation identified—Opposite the Shire Hall—The house described—Sale of Gainsborough's furniture and pictures—He leaves Ipswich for Bath—His work at Ipswich.

SUDBURY, the quiet country town in Suffolk where Thomas Gainsborough was born, is on the upper reaches of the Stour, the river on whose banks nearer the sea another great painter, John Constable, spent his youth and found the material for some of his best pictures. The Stour more than half encircles Sudbury, and as it curves and turns through the green meadows that surround the town glimpses of the river can be obtained from many of the wide and airy lanes and streets in which Gainsborough played and wandered as a boy. About these lanes and streets, with their Jacobean and Georgian houses, something of the eighteenth century atmosphere lingers, and although silks and other fabrics are made in Sudbury there is nothing about it that suggests the dingi-

ness of a manufacturing town. Everything seems bright and clean and smokeless, and even William Morris might have been satisfied with the external aspect of some of the older factories, such as those in the lane almost immediately adjoining the house in which Gainsborough was born—or is supposed to have been born; for on this point there is no direct evidence, although there is no doubt that the house was tenanted by Gainsborough's father at the time of the birth of his famous son. W. H. Pyne, the artist and writer who in his youth met Gainsborough, declared that he used to say, "Old pimply-nosed Rembrandt and myself were both born in a mill." The house once occupied by Gainsborough's father is externally a good example of the better kind built in East Anglia in the Georgian period, but it is said to be much older than it looks. It stands in what was once known as Sepulchre Street; now called Gainsborough Street in honour of the most distinguished native of the town.

In Sudbury the name of Gainsborough was well known for at least two hundred years. Gainsborough's grandfather was a burgess in the middle of the seventeenth century, and a hundred years later two or three branches of the family were engaged in business in the town. Some of them were prosperous, for the list of subscribers to the Suffolk Fund raised in 1745 to help the Government to oppose the Young Pretender includes the names of John Gainsborough, junior, and Elizabeth Gainsborough, of Sudbury. John gave twenty-five pounds to the fund and Elizabeth ten guineas. Several of the family were then engaged in the manufacture of woollen fabrics, among them John Gainsborough, the father of the painter, who died in 1748; and his cousin, who carried on a business of the same kind until his death, which took place in or about 1793. He was the last of the woollen-making Gainsboroughs, and with the death of his daughter Emily the family became extinct in Sudbury. Emily

Gainsborough, who died in 1852 at the age of sixty-six, was "a lady of ample fortune, which she spent in charity and benevolence." She lived in Sepulchre Street, not far from the supposed birthplace of Gainsborough, and her memory was long cherished in the town. An interesting point about Emily Gainsborough was that her features strongly resembled those of the great painter to whom she was related. She died suddenly, as Thomas her brother had done several years earlier; and as Ann Gainsborough, her cousin, and the last of the painter's nieces who bore his name, died in 1840.

The exact date of Gainsborough's birth is uncertain, but he was baptized in May 1727, at the Independent Meeting House in Friars Street. A large Congregational chapel has now taken the place of the original meeting-house, the records of which, dating back for more than two hundred years, have fortunately been preserved. They show an intimate connection between members of the Gainsborough family, most of whom were Dissenters, and the chapel in Friars Street. Some of the charitable funds of the chapel are due to the bequests of a certain Thomas Gainsborough, who was apparently a cousin of the painter. He must have had something of his relative's sociable and generous nature, for, when leaving considerable sums for the support of the schools and the minister, he was not unmindful of the comfort of the trustees by whom they were to be administered. Thomas Gainsborough left twenty shillings a year for the refreshment of the trustees at their annual meetings, and among the papers at the chapel is an old bill showing how the money was expended in 1752. This is the entry:

"*Feb.* 11*th.*—Spent the 20s. left by Mr. Thomas Gainsborough as follows:

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Dinner . .	0	8	0	Punch. .	0	2	4
Wine . .	0	3	0	Beer & Ale .	0	2	8
Coffee . .	0	3	0	Servant .	0	1	0"

John Gainsborough, the father of the painter, was at one time a man of substance, but his liberal disposition, added to the expense of bringing up a large family, gradually reduced his prosperity. His business of clothier or cloth merchant declined, and at the time of his death in 1748, he held the position of postmaster at Sudbury. He had five sons and four daughters. Of the sons the eldest, known as "Scheming Jack," was the inventor of many ingenious but apparently useless machines and instruments; the second, Humphry, was a Dissenting minister; and the youngest, Thomas, the painter, is the subject of this book. Little is known of the two remaining brothers, Mathias and Robert. The daughters, Mary, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Susannah, all found husbands. The eldest and the youngest, Mrs. Gibbon and Mrs. Gardiner, settled at Bath; but Sarah (Mrs. Dupont) and Elizabeth (Mrs. Bird), married and spent their lives in Sudbury. John Gainsborough's wife is said to have been a woman of cultivation, and an amateur painter. Her brother, the Rev, Humphry Burroughs, was the master of Sudbury Grammar School, and numbered his nephew Thomas among his pupils.

Of Thomas Gainsborough's boyhood, passed in the town of his birth, the record, slight as it is, appears to be chiefly legendary. The only positive piece of information concerning it is the letter already mentioned in the Preface, and written to Bate by Gainsborough in 1788, the year of his death. In that letter, which is to be found in Chapter XVI, Gainsborough says that his father sent him to London in consequence of the promise displayed in the landscape, *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, which he commenced before he left school.

Nor are we well informed about the young painter's life in London in the years that preceded his marriage, for the definite statements made by some writers about his tuition and his progress in the metropolis are more or less speculative. Fulcher says that Gainsborough lived

in London at the house of a silversmith, and probably this is right, for the original authority for the statement (though Fulcher did not know it) was the Reverend Henry Bate, whom I have mentioned in the Preface as the source of the larger part of the fresh information in this book relative to Gainsborough's later years in London. The silversmith may be the person referred to in an unpublished letter by Mrs. Lane, Gainsborough's niece. Speaking of her uncle's boyhood at Sudbury, she says, "An intimate friend of his mother's, being on a visit, was so struck by the merit of several heads he had taken, that he prevailed on his father to allow him to return with him to London, promising that he should remain with him and that he would procure him the best instruction he could obtain."

We know now from Gainsborough's letter that it was a landscape and not portraits that induced the boy's father to send his son to London at the age of thirteen, but otherwise there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the story told by Mrs. Lane, who lived on intimate terms with her uncle and his family, and was the mother of Richard Lane, A.R.A., and of the famous Arabic scholar, Edward William Lane. Mr. A. B. Chamberlain, in his life of Gainsborough, suggests that the silversmith was one of the Duponts who practised the craft in London in the first half of the eighteenth century, and as Gainsborough's sister married a Dupont of Sudbury the suggestion is not without interest. But there are no reasons for crediting the assertion, made positively by another writer, that Gainsborough himself began life in London as a goldsmith or silversmith.

Gainsborough's silversmith, according to Bate, was a man of taste, and a good friend to the young artist, as he often admitted in after years. Bate says that soon after his arrival in the metropolis Gainsborough made the acquaintance of Hubert Gravelot, a French artist, then residing in London, who introduced him to the

drawing school at the Academy of Arts in St. Martin's Lane. That he had some connection with the Frenchman seems clear, for on this point Bate is supported by the author of the obituary published in the *Morning Chronicle* on the day of Gainsborough's funeral, who says, "He soon after became a pupil of Mr. Gravelot, under whose instructions he drew most of the ornaments which decorate the illustrious heads, so admirably engraved by Houbraken." The heads were engraved for Birch's *Lives of Illustrious Persons in Great Britain*, and these volumes, as I shall show later, were among the very few books in Gainsborough's possession at the time of his death.

Charles Grignion, the engraver, who was contemporary with Gainsborough, also says that he received some rudimentary instruction from Gravelot, with whom, however, he seems to have worked rather as an assistant than as a pupil. Gravelot may have introduced Gainsborough to the Drawing Academy in St. Martin's Lane, but there is reason to believe that he cannot have worked there very much. More than ninety years ago W. H. Pyne, the writer already mentioned, compiled a list of the painters, sculptors, and engravers who had studied at the St. Martin's Lane Academy. He was assisted by "the last surviving member of this old English school of worthies—the pupil of Frank Hayman—John Taylor, who knew them all, and whose never-failing reminiscences have helped us, and that mainly too, in drawing up this list."

The list contains the names of a large number of artists, some well known and some forgotten, but that of Gainsborough does not appear in it. It seems impossible that the name of an artist so distinguished could have been omitted accidentally either by Taylor, who knew Gainsborough well, and has handed down to us an interesting note on *The Blue Boy*; or by Pyne, who was a devout admirer of the great Suffolk painter, and an in-

satiable collector of gossip concerning him. The omission is more remarkable because in the list the names are grouped together of all Hayman's pupils who had worked at St. Martin's Lane, including those of Dance and of John Taylor himself. And Hayman, it should be remembered, has been described as Gainsborough's master by all the biographers since Allan Cunningham.

A great deal has been written about the supposed influence of Hayman upon Gainsborough's painting and upon his moral character, and Fulcher has asserted that "whatever was questionable in Gainsborough's after conduct must in a great measure be attributed to his early removal from home influence, and to Hayman's example." Hayman certainly appears to have been a person of convivial and somewhat rowdy habits, and therefore not the man with whom to place a boy of thirteen, but the evidence that Hayman taught Gainsborough, or that he had anything to do with him, is extremely slight. It appears to be limited to a note in the *Anecdotes of Painting*, published twenty years after Gainsborough's death, by Edward Edwards, A.R.A., who says: "He was sent to London and placed under the tuition of Mr. Hayman, with whom, however, he stayed but a very short time." There is no mention of Hayman in the earlier biographical sketches by Philip Thicknesse, Henry Bate, Anthony Pasquin, and the anonymous author of the article in the *Morning Chronicle*, all of whom were personally acquainted with Gainsborough; and as I have shown, nothing is said of a connection between Gainsborough and Hayman by Taylor, who was himself Hayman's pupil.

Gainsborough, I believe, owed little either to masters or to academies of drawing, and that Reynolds was of this opinion is evident from his *Fourteenth Discourse*. In that he cites Gainsborough as an example of an artist who has arrived at great fame "without the assistance of an academical education, or any of those preparatory studies which have been so often recommended," and

adds that his handling had the appearance of the work of a painter who had never learned from others the usual and regular practice belonging to the art. In some of the notes made in preparing this address on Gainsborough, printed in Cotton's book, Sir Joshua writes: "It was said of him that he was self-educated. . . . In this self-instruction there is undoubtedly an animation in the pursuit, and self-gratulation in the success, that is flattering. But if Gainsborough had had the good fortune, which the present students have, of being taught in an Academy, we should not now regret what was perhaps his greatest deficiency, a want of precision in the form of his objects." Gainsborough in his lifetime was frequently spoken of as a self-taught artist. "Nature was his master, for he had no other," wrote Thicknesse in 1770; and the writer in the *Morning Chronicle*, though he says Gainsborough went as a pupil to Gravelot, heads his article, "By Heaven, and not a master, taught."

The same writer says that he "made his first essays in art by modelling figures of cows, horses, and dogs, in which he attained very great excellence. There is a cast in the plaister shops of an old horse that he modelled which has peculiar merit." But with whomsoever Gainsborough lived or studied he seems, young as he was, to have been able to look after himself from the first day that he arrived in London. Bate declares that henceforth he did not cost his family a penny. He remained in London for several years, and supported himself by modelling, working for Gravelot, and painting small portraits and landscapes.

It was probably in the year 1745 that he returned to Suffolk, to try his fortune as a painter in the town of his birth. There, according to a story told by William Windham (Pitt's Secretary for War), his earliest supporter was Mr. Fonnereau, a member of the family which long owned the beautiful old house in Christchurch Park, Ipswich, where the effigy of Tom Peartree is now to be

seen. Windham, who did not like Gainsborough, and described him as dissolute and capricious and not very delicate in his sentiments of honour, says that Mr. Fonnereau gave him his first chance by lending him £300, and that the painter was afterwards so forgetful of this benefit as to vote against his patron's interest in a parliamentary election. "His conscience, however, remonstrating against such conduct, he kept himself in a state of intoxication from the time he set out to vote till his return to town, that he might not relent of his ingratitude." The only thing that gives the slightest colour to this remarkable story is that one of the Fonnereaus was for a time the parliamentary representative of Sudbury.

Although at times he was glad to sell sketches for very small sums, it is unlikely that Gainsborough needed financial aid to give him a start in life. Even as a boy he possessed a money-making faculty, and he was only nineteen when he married a wealthy bride—wealthy, that is to say, for a youth of his standing and upbringing. His bride was Margaret Burr, a beautiful girl, of whose origin contradictory versions are given. Margaret Burr has been described by various authorities as "a prince's daughter," as an unacknowledged daughter of one of the Dukes of Bedford, and as the sister of a commercial traveller in the employ of Gainsborough's father. She was endowed not only with beauty but with an annuity of two hundred a year; equal to four or five hundred a year at the present value of money. The source of this income is conjectural, but I am able to give in another chapter some information as to the channel through which it reached the Gainsboroughs.

Mrs. Gainsborough's antecedents, though certainly mysterious, were perhaps less romantic than some writers have supposed, for I have discovered that she had relations living in London and in Scotland in 1794. A niece, Mary Burr, was at that time residing in Panton Street, Haymarket; and a nephew, James Burr, at

Bell's Mills, Edinburgh. There may be people living even to-day who could throw some light upon Mrs. Gainsborough's origin and connections. Mr. Alexander Fraser, writing thirty-five years ago in *The Portfolio*, stated that relatives of hers were at that time resident in Glasgow. "They have," he said, "or had until lately, a most delicately touched small cabinet portrait of Mrs. Gainsborough by her husband, the tradition in the family being that he annually for many years painted her portrait on the anniversary of her marriage day."

A marriage in which bride and bridegroom were both in their teens could be nothing but a lottery, and Gainsborough, who was perhaps not an easy man to live with, did not find the ideal wife in the beautiful Margaret Burr. Her character and conduct, as far as our information goes, were beyond reproach, but she appears to have been unreasonably economical, and to have looked too sharply after the expenditure of her husband, a man who was naturally generous and hospitable. The evidence of Philip Thicknesse on this point may not be unprejudiced as he was on bad terms with Mrs. Gainsborough; but it is supported by that of Henry Angelo, who knew the painter intimately. "Gainsborough," says Angelo, "afraid of his wife and consequently ill at ease at home, was not entirely comfortable abroad lest his Xantippe should discover what he expended on his rambles. It is true he was no economist of his cash, but the parsimony of his lady was beyond the endurance of any man possessing the least spirit of liberality, and Gainsborough was liberal to excess. Fischer, who, on the contrary, was anything rather than an uxorious spouse, used to banter his father-in-law upon this submission." In spite of Allan Cunningham's picture of evenings of domestic felicity, and Fulcher's pretty story of the tender messages conveyed by the agency of the pet dogs, Tristram and Fox, it is evident that little sympathy existed between Gainsborough and his wife. A sufficient

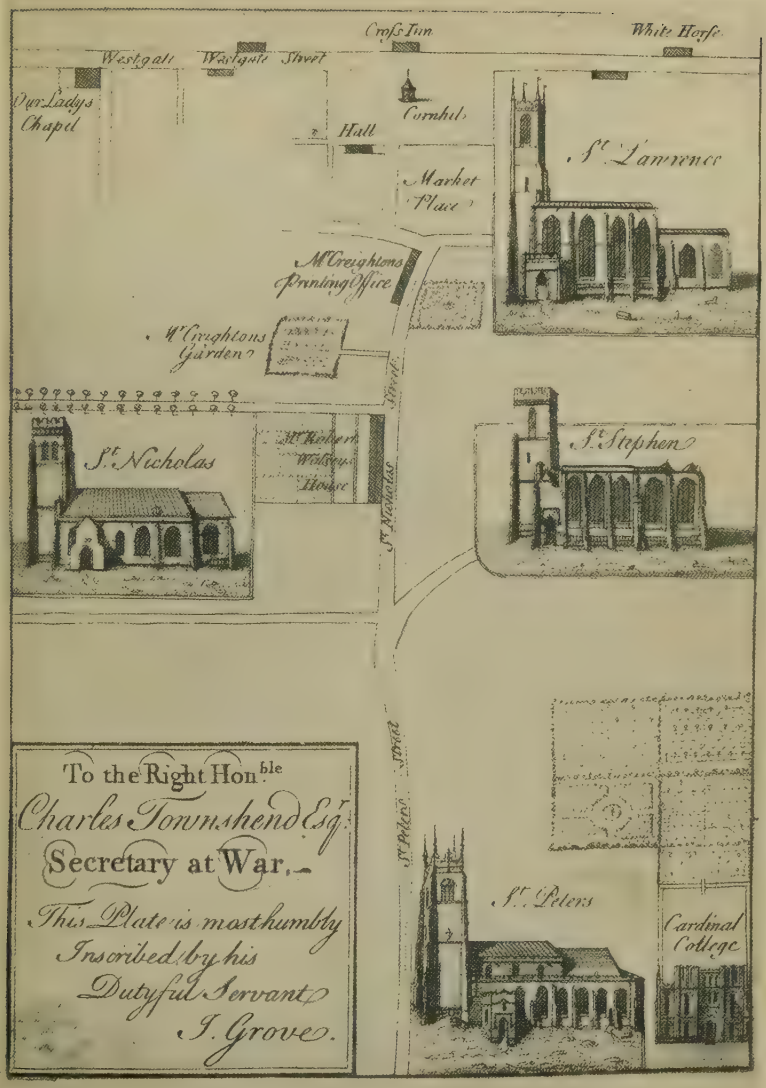
proof of this is to be found in the letter sent by the painter to his sister Mrs. Gibbon, at Bath, in December 1775. "What would it all signify," he wrote sadly, "if I tell you my wife is weak but good, and never much formed to humour my happiness; what can you do to alter her?"

Ipswich, in the middle of the eighteenth century, bore little resemblance to the busy, thriving town of to-day, with its great engineering works and prosperous industries of many other kinds. Its population at the time of the first census of 1801 was only eleven thousand, and was probably smaller when Gainsborough was living there. A contemporary writer describes the town as old and ill-built, with unlighted streets; and only enlivened by the occasional visits of travelling theatrical companies. But Ipswich, if dull, was picturesque, not only in its rustic suburbs and its riverside neighbourhood but in itself. To-day it is a curious mixture of old and new, factories and warehouses jostling and overshadowing the ancient buildings that are yet to be found in most of its numerous parishes. There are houses with overhanging eaves and carved corner-posts in Gainsborough's own parish of St. Mary Quay (or Key, as it was spelt in his time) that must already have been venerable when the boy artist brought his young wife to the town more than a hundred and sixty years ago; and in the central parts of Ipswich still finer relics may be found of the domestic architecture of bygone days. Of these the best is the magnificent "Sparrowe's House," in the Butter Market. One of the Sparrowes, a man who was thirteen times Bailiff of Ipswich, was painted by Gainsborough, and seventy or eighty years after he had left the town the portrait was still hanging in the house.

It was at Ipswich that Gainsborough made the acquaintance of Philip Thicknesse, to whose memoir of the painter we owe many stories which, whether true or false, have been embodied in all his biographies. Thicknesse,

a man of some parts, and at this time of some means, was the brother of that George Thicknesse, one time Master of St. Paul's School, whom Sir Philip Francis, his former pupil, described as "the quietest, learnedst, wisest and best of men." Philip Thicknesse, who had seen military service abroad, obtained in 1753 the appointment of Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort, built for the protection of Harwich, and apparently met Gainsborough soon afterwards, as he speaks in the memoir of 1788 of having had "an intimate acquaintance and most affectionate regard for him for upwards of thirty-five years." Gainsborough's artistic biography may almost be said to commence on the day when the newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor, walking in "a pretty town garden" belonging to Craighton, the printer and editor of the *Ipswich Journal*, saw, and was deceived by the effigy now known as "Tom Peartree." Thicknesse mistook for a real man's head and shoulders the painted board which the mischievous Gainsborough had fixed upon the garden wall, and was so surprised at the deception that he took the trouble to seek the artist at his house. He was received in a room full of landscapes and of portraits, one of which was that of Admiral Vernon, now in the National Portrait Gallery; and by his own showing he became from that time forth the patron and encourager of the most remarkable natural genius in painting produced by the English school. Thicknesse claims to have been the original discoverer of Gainsborough's talent, and the cause of his removal from Ipswich to Bath, and subsequently from Bath to London.

By a fortunate chance, when turning over some old plans of Ipswich at the British Museum, I came across a small engraving which shows the situation, and to some extent the arrangement, of Craighton's garden in which Gainsborough placed the painted board that imposed upon Thicknesse. The plate, dated 1761, is dedicated to Charles Townshend, then Secretary for War; but it was



PLAN OF PART OF IPSWICH IN 1761, SHOWING MR. CRAIGHTON'S GARDEN

evidently engraved for some special purpose of Craighton's own. In the borders are pictures of several of the Ipswich churches, and in the centre a plan of a small portion of the town round about St. Nicholas Street and the market-place, with "Mr. Craighton's Printing Office" and "Mr. Craighton's Garden" prominently displayed and labelled. It shows that the office where the *Ipswich Journal* was then printed stood on the west side of Queen Street, at the corner of the Butter Market. The garden did not adjoin Craighton's office, but was a little to the south-east, towards Friars Street, and was approached by a short alley or private road from Queen Street. There was no Princes Street in those days, and the offices of Messrs. Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies must, I think, stand on part of the "pretty town garden" in which Gainsborough placed his painting of Tom Peartree.

This curious work of art has now found a permanent home at Ipswich, in Christchurch Mansion, the fine old Tudor house that was presented to the town some years ago by Mr. Felix Cobbold. It represents the head and shoulders of a man with folded arms, painted, and cut out of a board. The man wears a hat which throws the upper part of his face into deep shadow, and shown as it is at Ipswich, with the elbows of the effigy resting on a low wall, it is easy to understand how Thicknesse and others may have been deceived when they saw it at a distance. As a painting it is commonplace, and Allan Cunningham must have been misinformed when he described it as a work much admired among artists. Its pedigree is given on a label hanging beside it at Christchurch Mansion. From Craighton, in whose garden Thicknesse saw it, the figure passed to Stephen Jackson, grandfather of the late proprietor of the *Ipswich Journal*, and it was still in the possession of the Jackson family when it was shown at the Gainsborough exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885. Some years later it was acquired by Messrs. Leggatt, the picture dealers, and by

them sold to Mr. W. H. Booth, who presented it to the town of Ipswich.

Most of Gainsborough's biographers connect this figure of "Tom Peartree" with the oft-told story of the boy artist sketching the portrait of the rustic who was plotting an attack on a pear tree in the elder Gainsborough's orchard at Sudbury. It is even said that the stump of the tree can still be seen at Sudbury, but in so far as it relates to that town I believe this story to be purely mythical. Cunningham, writing in 1829, appears to have been the first to couple "Tom Peartree" with the Sudbury orchard. With characteristic picturesqueness Cunningham describes young Gainsborough as concealed among some bushes, in the act of drawing an old tree, "when he observed a man looking most wistfully over the wall at some pears, which were hanging ripe and tempting. The slanting light of the sun happened to throw the eager face into a highly picturesque mixture of light and shade, and the boy immediately sketched his likeness, much to the poor man's consternation afterwards, and to the amusement of Gainsborough's father, when he taxed the peasant with the intention of plundering his garden, and showed him how he looked. Gainsborough long afterwards made a finished painting of this Sudbury rustic, under the name of Tom Peartree's portrait." Fulcher, in his life of the artist published twenty-seven years later, adopts Cunningham's statement that "Tom Peartree" was painted from the Sudbury sketch, and further embroiders the story with a summer-house in the orchard, in which the boy Gainsborough was hidden; describes the very features of the man, "in which roguery and indolence, hope and fear, were happily blended," and makes him not merely covet the pears, but steal them.

Neither Cunningham nor Fulcher appears to have known where the story originated that connects with Gainsborough's boyhood the episode of the man and the

orchard. It is to be found in the obituary article on Gainsborough already mentioned, which was published in the *Morning Chronicle* three or four days after his death. There it lacks the detail of the later versions, but the motive of the story is identical—with one important exception. The orchard was not that of Gainsborough's father. It is not even said that it was at Sudbury, but only "in the neighbourhood," at some place where young Gainsborough was staying with a clergyman named Coyte. It was Coyte's orchard the man was proposing to rob when the boy artist saw him.

The real story of the painted effigy now at Ipswich is told by Thicknesse in a passage that has been most unaccountably overlooked by all subsequent biographers of Gainsborough. Thicknesse, it will be remembered, made the acquaintance of Gainsborough through seeing the "Tom Peartree" figure, the name of which we know only through his memoir of the painter. He describes early in his book the scene of the deception in the garden, and on a later page apologises for having left unexplained the origin of the painted man. "This," says Thicknesse, "Mr. Gainsborough related when I first visited him. At the bottom of his Ipswich garden grew a fine bergamot pear tree, and while Mr. Gainsborough had his palette and brushes in his hand Thomas was looking over the wall and contemplating how he could come at some of the windfalls. The sun shone just upon the top of Thomas's nose and chin while all the rest of his dejected countenance appeared in shadow under his broad-brimmed hat, which so struck Mr. Gainsborough's fancy (for such are the happy moments for poets and painters) that he snatched up his window shutter and got Thomas into his painting-room before he had even tasted of the forbidden fruit."

It is, I think, evident that Sudbury can claim no share in the Tom Peartree incident, and it is probable that the legend of Gainsborough sketching the man in his father's

orchard owes its origin altogether to the story as told by Philip Thicknesse. The introduction of the name of Coyte into the affair was perhaps due to the fact that the large botanical garden of Dr. Coyte, at Ipswich, was close to, if it did not actually adjoin, the pleasure ground belonging to Mr. Craighton of the *Ipswich Journal*, where Gainsborough set the painted figure on the wall. Coyte's Gardens, a narrow, old-fashioned alley leading out of Friars Street, still marks at Ipswich the locality of the former domain of the botanist.

To the *Ipswich Journal*, while edited by Craighton, I am indebted for some new information concerning Gainsborough and his Suffolk friends and associates. Unfortunately the *Ipswich Journal*, in common with most country newspapers of the eighteenth century, did not give much space to local news. Its information was copied almost entirely from the London press, and sometimes it contained no Ipswich intelligence beyond the number of births and deaths recorded in the week preceding publication. Such country news as the paper gives consists in great part of reports of murders, robberies with violence, and conflicts between smugglers and excisemen. There are frequent references to highwaymen, who seem to have exercised a reign of terror over the entire country, and at whose hands both Gainsborough and his nephew Dupont were destined to suffer in after years.

The portion of the *Ipswich Journal* which best reflects the life of the ancient Suffolk town is the space devoted to advertisements, and it is here alone that any reference to the artist and his friends can be found. That the town was not unmindful of the graphic arts in Gainsborough's days is shown by the announcements of occasional sales of paintings by eminent masters; and of engravings, advertised by London dealers through local agents. Sometimes there are records of visits made to the town by travelling artists, such as Mr. Ferguson,

limner in China ink, who offers to draw a portrait on vellum and supply it with frame and glass complete for fifteen shillings. The advertisement of a travelling exhibition of "fine paintings, done by the celebrated Raphael," and held at the King's Head, indicates in its concluding paragraph that the pictures of the Italian master needed some extraneous attraction to draw the Ipswich crowd to the show: "*N.B.*—A sober and honest Man that blows a French Horn or Trumpet may have good encouragement." "Florist's Feasts" and other flower shows, particularly of auriculas, were frequent in their season, and music was patronised extensively. Gainsborough must have found great pleasure in the numerous concerts, at one of which, as we know by his letters, he met the violinist Giardini. In 1758, the year before the painter left for Bath, a series of twenty-six concerts was given at Ipswich at fortnightly intervals, and several of the concerts were followed by balls.

So far as I have been able to discover there is nothing about Gainsborough in the editorial columns of the papers published during his residence in Ipswich, but this is not surprising, as he was a comparatively obscure personage of no local importance. Of the advertisements only two concern him directly, but both are of great interest, as will be seen later. There are many advertisements from Joshua Kirby, his friend of friends, and the future President of the Society of Artists of Great Britain, by whose side Gainsborough, at his own request, was buried in the churchyard at Kew. Except for his interest in painting, Kirby, with whom he formed so close an intimacy, does not appear to have had many sympathies with the gay and pleasure-loving Gainsborough. The father of the irreproachable Mrs. Trimmer, of educational and Sunday-school renown (whose books Queen Charlotte lent sometimes to Fanny Burney), Kirby was a man of uncommon piety. "So high was his reputa-

tion for knowledge and divinity, and so exemplary his moral conduct, that as an exception to the general rule, which admitted no laymen, he was chosen member of a clerical club in the town in which he resided." The biographer of another member of the same family, William Kirby, the entomologist, denies that Joshua Kirby was a coach and house-painter, but the advertisements in the *Ipswich Journal* prove conclusively that he did follow those honest but unaristocratic occupations, and it is to his credit that he was not ashamed of them. James Gandon, who was the contemporary of Kirby, says that he was the apprentice of a widow who carried on a house and sign-painter's business at Ipswich, and that it was Hogarth who encouraged him to practise the fine arts after seeing a rose that he had executed for a sign. Gainsborough may have assisted Kirby at times in his house-painting business, for Thicknesse says that the young artist came back to Suffolk after his few years of London training hoping to pick up a decent livelihood "by turning his hand to every kind of painting."

Joshua Kirby appears as an advertiser in the *Ipswich Journal* as early as 1745, when he offers for sale "A Curious Print of Mr. Garrick, from an original Painting by Mr. Pond, engrav'd by Mr. Wood," at a shilling a copy. He is anxious soon afterwards to dispose of "A Genteel Chariot"; and in 1751, as agent for Mr. Hogarth at the Golden Head in Leicester Fields, he advertises for sale, at eighteenpence each the large prints of *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*. Kirby had many dealings with Hogarth, and a letter written by him from Ipswich to the combative little artist of Leicester Fields can be seen at the British Museum. Hogarth designed for Kirby the frontispiece of the edition of Brook Taylor's *Perspective made Easy*, for which subscriptions were invited in 1751. Kirby, in 1755, advertises in the Ipswich paper the second edition of this work, and states at the same time that "the Author continues to carry on the Painting Busi-

ness as usual, and all orders shall be obeyed with the greatest punctuality."

In August 1755 there appears upon the scene Mr. Andrew Baldrey, a friend of Gainsborough's, whose name until now has only been known in connection with the notice of his death in 1802. He was then described as a man of considerable merit as a painter, but diffident of his own abilities, and "long an intimate acquaintance of the late Mr. Gainsborough." Andrew Baldrey, whose identity had been a puzzle to me, and probably to many others interested in Gainsborough's history, now proves to have been Joshua Kirby's chief assistant in the house and coach-painting business, who this year was taken into partnership with his principal. The event is thus announced in 1755:

"The Painting Business in which Joshua Kirby hath been engaged for several years past is now carried on in partnership with him and his late servant, Andrew Baldrey, and those gentlemen who shall be pleased to continue their favours may depend upon having their business done in each branch of painting in the best manner and upon the most reasonable terms. J. Kirby humbly hopes that those gentlemen who have not been personally applied to on this occasion will be so good as to excuse it."

Fulcher says that Kirby left Ipswich for London in 1753, but this announcement shows that he did not admit a partner to his business until 1755; and he did not entirely sever his connection with Ipswich until the end of September 1759, about three weeks before Gainsborough's departure for Bath. Kirby's son, a youth of promise as a painter, was the pupil of Gainsborough, whom he is said to have disliked as a master. Young Kirby was studying at Ipswich in August 1759, and in the following month his father came down from London, and, resigning all further interest in the house-painting business, transferred his share of it to Andrew Baldrey, who carried it on until his death. The name of Baldrey

was borne by several painters and engravers who worked in the eastern counties in the later years of the eighteenth century; and Joshua Kirby Baldrey, who sometimes exhibited pictures at the Royal Academy, was the son of Gainsborough's Ipswich friend.

Two letters written by Gainsborough while at Ipswich indicate that portrait commissions in Suffolk were plentiful enough, even if the prices were not high. The first letter shows, too, that Gainsborough was already particular about the placing of his pictures in the exact light for which they were painted. He says, writing to a correspondent in the neighbouring town of Colchester, on February 24, 1757:

"I am favoured with your obliging letter, and shall finish your picture in two or three days at farthest, and send to Colchester according to your order, with a frame. I thank you, Sir, for your kind intention of procuring me a few heads to paint when I come over, which I purpose doing as soon as some of those are finished which I have in hand. I should be glad if you'd place your picture as far from the light as possible; observing to let the light fall from the left."

Apparently Gainsborough was prevented from paying a visit to Colchester by pressure of portrait work at home, as in March 1758 he writes to the same correspondent to apologise for not visiting him as he had promised. "But business comes in, and being chiefly in the Face way I'm afraid to put people off when they are in the mind to sit." He goes on to speak of the portrait sent to Colchester in the preceding year, and excuses its supposed coarseness of texture:

"You please me much by saying that no other fault is to be found in your picture than the roughness of the surface; for that part being of use in giving force to the effect at a proper distance, and what a judge of painting knows an original from a copy by; in short being the touch of the pencil which is harder to preserve than smoothness, I am much better pleased that they should

THE PARISH OF ST. MARY KEY, IPSWICH, 1778

Gainsborough's House in Foundation Street is marked with a white cross

spy out things of that kind than to see an eye half an inch out of its place or a nose out of drawing when view'd at a proper distance. I don't think it would be more ridiculous for a person to put his nose close to the canvas and say the colours smell offensive than to say how rough the paint lies; for one is just as material as the other with regard to hurting the effect and drawing of a picture. For Sir Godfrey Kneller used to tell them that pictures were not made to smell of. . . ."

The second letter was written only eighteen months before Gainsborough's departure for Bath, but he seems from the first to have found commissions at Ipswich and in the neighbouring districts, as we know that some portraits, "perfectly like but stiffly painted," were seen by Thicknesse in his studio in 1753. He may have found patrons among the visitors to Harwich, a seaport to which in the season well-to-do Londoners were thronging at this time. "The new salt water baths at Harwich," wrote Walpole in 1755, "grows the most fashionable resource for people who want to get out of town."

According to Fulcher, Gainsborough's house at Ipswich was in Brook Street, and No. 41 Lower Brook Street, a small red-brick house not far from the Quay, is now shown as his former residence. However, it is curious that a carefully compiled guide-book of about fifty years ago mentions as already demolished the house in Lower Brook Street that local tradition assigned to Gainsborough. In describing the principal objects in the town the writer of the guide-book says: "We need not take Lower Brook Street on our way, for little can be said of it, except that here stood the house that Gainsborough is said to have inhabited." Fulcher, who did not write his book until nearly a century after the painter had left Ipswich for Bath, gives no authority for his assertion about the house in Brook Street. It would be unsafe to say that Gainsborough never lived there, but I have indisputable proof that he was not living in Lower Brook Street at the close of his sojourn in Ipswich. The *Ipswich*

Journal of October 20, 1759, contains the following advertisement, which is valuable as showing the long disputed date of Gainsborough's departure from the town:

"To be Sold, Opposite the Shire Hall, Ipswich. On Monday and Tuesday next, the 22nd and 23rd inst. All the HOUSEHOLD GOODS OF MR. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH, with some PICTURES and original DRAWINGS in the Landskip way by his own hand, which, as he is desirous of leaving them among his friends, will have the lowest prices set upon them. The house to be let immediately. Enquire of Mrs. Elizabeth Rasse, in Ipswich."

It must have been this sale that Fulcher's correspondent, Mr. Strutt, had in his mind when he wrote the often-quoted letter describing how Gainsborough's sketch of the members of the Ipswich musical club came into the possession of his family. "When Gainsborough was leaving Ipswich," wrote Mr. Strutt to Fulcher, "his friends paid a last visit to his studio and expressed a wish to have some memorial of his pencil. The good-natured artist complied. One took one sketch, one another; and finally that I have been describing came into my father's hands." Evidently Gainsborough did not give the pictures to his friends but sold them at nominal prices.

The Shire Hall at Ipswich was a seventeenth-century building of red brick and white stone that stood in the centre of an open space adjoining Foundation Street, and known as Shire Hall Yard. It was used for various municipal and county purposes until it was pulled down to make room for the almshouses which have now taken its place. Shire Hall Yard was bounded on the north by the ancient buildings of Christ's Hospital, and on the west by Foundation Street, the thoroughfare in which Gainsborough dwelt. The advertisement in the *Ipswich Journal* does not define the position of his house beyond saying that it faced the Shire Hall, but I have been able to trace its exact site by the aid of a passage in the diary of Thomas Green, the Ipswich poet and writer, to whom

we owe some valuable notes on Gainsborough. Thomas Green was not born until ten years after the painter had left Ipswich, but he was deeply interested in Gainsborough and liked to gossip about him with older inhabitants such as the Mrs. Dupuis, whom he quotes more than once. I have discovered that this lady was the daughter of Gainsborough's lifelong friend, Samuel Kilderbee of Ipswich. In April 1818, Green writes in his diary: "Much chat with Mrs. Dupuis respecting Gainsborough, who lived here on the site Mr. Tunney's house now occupies. His wife Margaret, natural daughter of the Duke of Bedford." This chance mention of Mr. Tunney by Green has enabled me to identify the spot on which Gainsborough's house stood.

Shire Hall Yard, as I have already explained, adjoined Foundation Street. The space corresponding to the Yard on the opposite side of the street was in great part occupied by a playing-field belonging to the Grammar School, and Pennington's large and excellent plan of Ipswich, published in 1778, indicates only one house that corresponds with the description in the advertisement, "opposite the Shire Hall." The plan shows this house on the west side of Foundation Street, at the corner of the northern boundary of the playing-field. Standing close to the street, the house had a frontage of about thirty feet, with small outbuildings to the north and west, and a garden in the rear ninety feet in length, in which the careful Pennington has even indicated the position of the flower beds. Only one thing could throw any doubt on the probability that this house was Gainsborough's, and that was the date of the plan. It was not published until nineteen years after the artist had left Ipswich for Bath, and in the interval the locality might have undergone some change. But the connection of the house with Mr. Tunney in the note in Thomas Green's diary makes everything clear.

The Rev. R. J. Tunney, who was chaplain of the

County Gaol, was married in Ipswich in Waterloo Year, and lived for a long period in Foundation Street, where he died at an advanced age in 1854. Foundation Street is unnumbered in the earlier directories of the town, and it was impossible to find out from them in what part of the street Mr. Tunney lived, but this difficulty was overcome by the courtesy of the editor of the *East Anglian Daily Times*. He published a letter from me asking for information, which brought forth replies from several correspondents who had been pupils at the Grammar School about 1850, and remembered Mr. Tunney's house as standing in Foundation Street at the northern corner of the playground. This, of course, was the identical spot upon which Pennington, in 1778, had indicated, on his large plan, the only house then standing "opposite the Shire Hall"—the house of Gainsborough's upon the site of which, as Green says, that of Tunney was built. The Grammar School (where Sir Edward Poynter was a pupil) has long been removed to the suburbs of the town, and the old playground is now built over. But Mr. F. C. Gower of Ipswich, one of the correspondents referred to, was kind enough to examine carefully the houses in Foundation Street, and he says that there is not the slightest doubt that No. 34 (next door to the vicarage of St. Mary Quay) is the one that he remembers as standing at the corner of the playground in 1850, and then in the occupation of old Mr. Tunney, who used to complain, not infrequently, of the damage done to his flower-beds by the footballs and other missiles sent over the wall by the Grammar School boys. It was from the end of the garden at what is now No. 34 Foundation Street, that Tom Peartree stood watching the windfalls on the grass until Gainsborough, catching sight of the rustic leaning over the wall, called him into the studio and painted the effigy that is shown at Christchurch Mansion.

A few weeks after Gainsborough's departure for Bath

an advertisement appeared in the *Ipswich Journal* which gives us some idea of the accommodation of the house in which the painter had lived:

"To be Let at Lady Day Next. A House in the Key Parish, facing the Shire Hall in Ipswich, late in the occupation of Mr. Gainsborough; consisting of a Hall, two Parlours, a Kitchen, Wash-house; with a Garden and Stable, good Cellars, and well supplied with Cock Water; five Chambers and Garrets with other conveniencies. For further particulars apply to Mrs. Rasse, in Ipswich."

Of Mrs. Rasse I know nothing, but she was no doubt connected with Mr. Thomas Rasse, grocer, of Ipswich, who a few years earlier was seeking for a tenant for what, by the description, was evidently the same house in the Key Parish. Mr. Rasse's advertisement, published in January 1752, stated that the house in the Key Parish, "now in the occupation of the Rev. Mr. Broom," would be vacant in the following June, and at that time, or soon afterwards, it was no doubt taken by Gainsborough, who probably moved from Sudbury to Ipswich about 1752, and not, as Fulcher says, in 1745 or 1746. Fulcher's statement has been accepted by most of the later biographers, but that it is inaccurate is proved by the newly discovered letter to which I have referred. This shows that Gainsborough was still living in Sudbury and painting there in 1748. It seems likely that Gainsborough's stay in Ipswich was much shorter than has been supposed, and that he did not settle in the town till he took Mr. Rasse's house in 1752 or thereabouts. This theory is supported by Thicknesse, who says: "Soon after his remove to Ipswich I was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Landguard Fort, not far distant." The date of Thicknesse's appointment was 1753.

Gainsborough, when he went from the town of his adoption to seek a wider field in the gay and fashionable western city, left behind him a sincere admirer and follower, whose studies and sketches of Old Ipswich are of

peculiar interest to-day. This was George Frost, of whom Constable speaks in a letter written from Suffolk in 1797 to J. T. Smith, in answer to an inquiry from that entertaining old gossip for local information about Gainsborough. Smith, who in his youth had been acquainted with the painter, and has left us some amusing reminiscences of him, thought that Constable—a Suffolk man revisiting his native county only nine years after Gainsborough's death—might have been able to glean some anecdotes. He was mistaken, for Constable came across little worth recording except a vague story of the musical club at Ipswich, of some of whose members Gainsborough painted the portraits. He was himself a member of the club, "and was generally the butt of the company, and his wig was to them a fund of amusement, as it was often snatched from his head and thrown about the room. . . . I believe in Ipswich they did not know his value till they lost him."

Constable, in this letter, mentions Frost as an Ipswich drawing-master who sought inspiration on Gainsborough's old sketching-grounds by the Orwell, but he was also a collector of Gainsborough's pictures. Frost, at the time of his death, was possessed of numerous drawings from the hand of the master, and one treasure that was more valuable than any of them, Gainsborough's famous picture of *The Mall, St. James's Park*. At Ipswich Frost lived in Gainsborough's parish close to St. Mary Key (Quay), which is distinguished among the many other ancient churches of Ipswich by the great key that forms its weathercock. The studies he has left of Ipswich and its neighbourhood give us the best existing pictures of the surroundings of Gainsborough in the first of the three periods of his life as a painter.

Many of the numerous landscapes and portraits produced by Gainsborough at Ipswich have, unfortunately, disappeared, and among them the view of Landguard Fort which he was commissioned by Thicknesse to

THE PAINTER'S DAUGHTERS

paint for the sum of fifteen guineas. This picture was destroyed by the dampness of the wall upon which it was hung, but copies of the print of it by Major are still in existence. Among the surviving portraits are the *Admiral Vernon*, now in the National Portrait Gallery, and painted probably when that gallant sailor was member of Parliament for Ipswich; the study in the National Gallery of *The Painter's Daughters;* and the earlier portraits of the Hingeston family, exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885. The Hingestons were Suffolk people and friends of Gainsborough, and in their house at Southwold *The Painter's Daughters* is supposed at one time to have hung. Judging by the apparent age of the children, the charming study of Margaret and Mary Gainsborough in the Victoria and Albert Museum must date from about the same period as the National Gallery painting. The Museum portrait, in which one of the little girls is seen with her hand placed on her sister's head, once belonged to John Jackson, R.A. From him it passed into the possession of Macready the actor and John Forster, between whom the canvas was divided, one head going to each purchaser. John Forster ultimately acquired both, and bequeathed the two portraits, once more united, to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

It is likely that one of Gainsborough's rustic subject pictures was painted at Ipswich, as an engraving of it was published only a few months after the artist had left Suffolk. When this picture, *The Rural Lovers*, was engraved, it was the property of Mr. Panton Betew, a silversmith and dealer in pictures who had frequently sold small early works for Gainsborough, as he recalled to J. T. Smith after the painter had become famous. "Well," said he, "there is your great Mr. Gainsborough. I have many and many a time had a drawing of his in my shop window before he went to Bath; ay, and he has often been glad to receive seven or eight shillings from me for what I have sold."

CHAPTER II

BATH, 1760-1766

From east to west—Gainsborough settles in Bath in 1759—The theory of an earlier visit to the city discredited—The Whitehead letter not written from Bath—*The Town and Country Magazine*—Where Gainsborough lived in Bath—Abbey Churchyard—Lansdowne Road—The Circus—Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs. Thicknesse—He exhibits at the Society of Artists—His first press notice—Garrick's letter on Quin's portrait—Jealousy of Hudson—Wiltshire, the Bath carrier—Gainsborough's banking account—His wife's mysterious annuity—His death reported—He exhibits Garrick's portrait—An adverse newspaper criticism—The Rev. William Peters—*The Festoon*.

GAINSBOROUGH, as we have seen, disposed of his furniture and many of his pictures at Ipswich in October 1759, and crossed England from east to west to try his fortune in Bath, that centre of fashion and gaiety in which he was to spend the next fourteen or fifteen years of his life. There is a theory that he had already passed a winter in Bath before leaving Ipswich for good, but the evidence in support of this appears upon examination to be untrustworthy. It is contained in a letter, given by several of Gainsborough's biographers as written by Whitehead to Lord Harcourt, from Bath, under date December 5, 1758. "We have a painter here," says Whitehead, "who takes the most exact likenesses I ever saw. His painting is coarse and slight, but has ease and spirit. Lord Villiers sat to him before he left Bath, and I hope we shall be able to bring his picture to town with us, as it is he himself, and is preferable in my opinion to the finest unlike picture in the universe, though it might serve for a sign; he sate only twice. The painter's name is Gainsborough." In newspaper articles this has been cited

again and again during the last three or four years as a proof that Gainsborough was painting at Bath in 1758. As quoted Whitehead's letter seems convincing, but a closer examination shows it to be a careless and inaccurate copy of the original transcript in *The Harcourt Papers*.

In the first place the letter is dated December the 6th, not the 5th, and is addressed not to Lord Harcourt but to Lord Nuneham. These mistakes are unimportant, but not so is the statement that the letter was written from Bath. In *The Harcourt Papers* it is dated "Middleton." There are many Middletons in England, but the reference to Lord Villiers suggests that Gainsborough at the time this letter was written was painting portraits of some of the Villiers family at Middleton Park. William Whitehead's connection with Middleton was peculiarly intimate as he was tutor to Lord Villiers, and when he says, "We have a painter here," he means at the seat near Bicester of the Earl of Jersey, the father of Lord Villiers, who was at this time a young man of three or four and twenty. It seems reasonable to suppose that if Gainsborough were staying at Middleton to paint portraits, Lord Villiers—the eldest son of the house—sat to him there, and that it was from Middleton that Whitehead hoped to bring his portrait to town. Perhaps Whitehead missed a word in his letter and intended to write, "Lord Villiers sat to him before he left (for) Bath"?

A curious article that has some bearing on this subject is to be found in the *Town and Country Magazine* of September 1772, but it can hardly be taken seriously. It is anonymous, and purports to be composed of extracts from the diary of 1758 of a man deceased. He is described as having had a mania for seeking out geniuses, and we are told that in November 1758, some time before his death, he went to Ipswich in search of an artist named Gainsborough, who was said to be living there. Arrived at the Suffolk town he asks the landlord of the inn where Mr. Gainsborough the painter lives. "He has not

lived here a good while, sir." "No! where then?" "I believe he is at Bath, sir." The genius-hunter hastens to Bath, finds the artist's house, and after one or two rebuffs is admitted to the painting-room and has a brief conversation with Gainsborough. He calls again the next day, and is allowed to see some of the works of the artist, who himself remains invisible. However, the honours of the studio are done by a communicative friend of Gainsborough's, who gives the inquisitive stranger a singular and obviously inaccurate account of the reasons that had induced the genius to settle at Bath. The friend says that he has known Gainsborough for years; that at first he was only a landscape painter, and as such must have starved, had not an accident brought him to Bath, "where, by way of amusement, he painted the heads of a few of his acquaintances; the likeness was too perfect not to strike every one. He then, upon the advice of his friends, professed himself—what he is so admirably calculated for—a portrait-painter."

This, of course, is nonsense. Gainsborough practised at Ipswich as a professional portrait-painter for years before he went to Bath. Thicknesse, when he called on Gainsborough at Ipswich in 1753, saw several portraits in his studio, and that he had numerous commissions of a similar nature we know from his letters of 1757 and 1758. Equally impossible to accept is the supposed statement of the Ipswich innkeeper that in November 1758 Gainsborough had already left Ipswich "a good while." We know now that he did not leave Ipswich until the end of October 1759. The article in the *Town and Country Magazine* is amusing, but it reads suspiciously like a joke, and was perhaps written by some Bath wag to tease Gainsborough, who by the time it was published, late in 1772, had attained to a position second only to that of Reynolds in the public estimation. Some such idea as this may have crossed the mind of the editor of the magazine, as he would not publish the article until

it had been altered and amended. In any case, an anonymous communication alleged to be founded on the diary of a nameless man written many years earlier should have no weight against the direct evidence of Philip Thicknesse, who in 1759 had a house in Bath, and was one of the several friends of the painter who prevailed upon him to remove there from Ipswich.

Thicknesse, who in this matter could have no motive for prevarication, says: "After Gainsborough's arrival in Bath I accompanied him in search of lodgings, where a good painting-room as to light, a proper access, &c., could be had, and upon our return to my house, where his wife was impatiently awaiting the event, he told her he had seen lodgings of fifty pounds a year, in the Churchyard, which he thought might answer his purpose." From this it is evident that Gainsborough was visiting Bath for the first time, and was a stranger to the place. If he had spent the preceding winter painting portraits in Bath he would not have required a guide to help him find lodgings and a studio.

The exact locality of the house or houses in which the painter lived during his residence in Bath is as vague as most things connected with Gainsborough's career. Local antiquarians have placed him in this house and the other, but in no case that I have discovered do they give any evidence in support of their assertions. Mr. F. Shum, F.S.A., writing in 1875, says: "The conclusion I have arrived at is that Gainsborough first occupied rooms in the Abbey Churchyard, then a centre of attraction. Then he took a house in Ainslie's Belvedere. . . . Afterwards he moved to a detached house in Lansdowne Road, known as Lansdowne Lodge, but during the greater part of the time he was in Bath he occupied a house in The Circus, either Doctor Spender's, No. 17, or one of the houses on either side." In 1883, the late Mr. R. E. M. Peach, writing in his *Historic Houses in Bath*, improves upon Mr. Shum by saying that Thicknesse, after bringing

Gainsborough to Bath, "induced him to take apartments at 14 Abbey Churchyard at £50 per annum." Is there any reason, I wonder, for this most definite statement, or is it mere conjecture based on the fact that Thicknesse mentions the Churchyard and £50? It should be remembered that he does not say that Gainsborough took the rooms. Mr. Peach agrees with Mr. Shum about Ainslie's Belvedere, but discards the detached residence in Lansdowne Road, and as to The Circus places Gainsborough, not at No. 17 or one of the adjoining houses, but at No. 24. Further he adds to the general uncertainty by mentioning that the late Dr. Wilbraham Falconer always believed that Gainsborough lived at the house in The Circus once tenanted by his grandfather, Dr. Thomas Falconer, which was No. 29.

By 1902 the local historians appear to have made up their differences about the house in The Circus and to have declared for No. 24, as a memorial tablet was placed upon its front describing it as the former residence of the artist. Sir Walter Armstrong, as an authority upon Gainsborough, visited Bath in June 1902, for the purpose of unveiling the tablet, which ceremony was performed with proper state in the presence of the Mayor and Corporation. Sir Walter made a lengthy speech, in the course of which he spoke about the disputed origin and dates of the picture of *The Blue Boy*, and in reference to Gainsborough's house said that the artist lived at No. 24 The Circus for fourteen years. In this Sir Walter was mistaken. Fourteen years would cover the whole period of Gainsborough's residence in Bath, and it is easy to show that he did not take the house in The Circus until six or seven years after the date of his settlement in the city. The *Bath Chronicle* of January 30, 1766, contains the following advertisement:

"To be Lett, Ready Furnish'd and entered upon immediately, a house in Lansdowne Road, Bath, three doors this side of Mr. Gainsborough's, consisting of three

rooms on a floor, an exceeding good kitchen, servants' hall, &c., with plenty of water and a garden fifty yards deep. Enquire of George Jesson, Esq., at Mr. Taylor's, Cutler, in the Market Place, or at Mr. Morgan's Coffee House."

This shows that Gainsborough was living in Lansdowne Road in 1766. How long he had been there I have been unable to discover, but an advertisement in another paper, fourteen months later, shows that by that time he was settled in The Circus. Probably he removed to The Circus about Christmas 1766; as the following advertisement, from the *Bath Journal* of March 16, 1767, seems to indicate that he has recently left Lansdowne Road and is trying to find a tenant for the house he has vacated:

"To be Lett, and entered upon immediately, a neat DWELLING HOUSE pleasantly situated above the Turnpike, Lansdowne Road, Bath. For particulars enquire of Mr. Gainsborough, in The Circus."

The house was still unlet in September 1767, when it was described in another advertisement as having a good garden, and with "a very good cold bath adjoining"; and as situated in Lansdowne Road, and "late in the occupation of Mr. Gainsborough." These advertisements in the Bath papers prove that Gainsborough lived for some time in Lansdowne Road, and that the period of his residence in the aristocratic Circus could not have extended to much more than seven years. To those unacquainted with Bath it should be explained that Lansdowne Road is a thoroughfare leading by a sharp ascent to the open country on the north-west, and commanding magnificent views from its highest point. Ainslie's Belvedere, where Shum and Peach allege that Gainsborough lived for a time, is a group of houses adjoining Lansdowne Road on the summit of the hill.

The tablet unveiled by Sir Walter Armstrong is still to be seen in The Circus, but there seems to be no par-

ticular reason why it was affixed to No. 24 in preference to any of the remaining twenty-nine houses. The Corporation appears to have been guided in this matter by the opinion of R. E. M. Peach, but unfortunately the author of *Historic Houses in Bath* has left us no evidence in favour of the attribution to No. 24. Mr. T. Sturge Cotterell, who was a member of the committee appointed to affix the Gainsborough tablet, has given me all the information in his power; and the Town Clerk of Bath, Mr. Frederick D. Wardle, kindly allowed me to examine the contemporary rate and other books at the Guildhall. But I have found nothing to support the Peach theory, and Gainsborough is unmentioned in any of the Corporation's documents. The Circus is in Walcot parish, which in the eighteenth century made its own rates, and the only place in Bath in which I came across Gainsborough's name in a contemporary official record was the vestry of Walcot Church. There, in an old rate-book of 1767, it is stated that "Mr. Gainsbury" was called upon to pay an assessment of 24*s*. for his house in The Circus. The list in the book gives the names of twenty-five other ratepayers in The Circus, but it is of little value as a guide to the position of Gainsborough's house. Even if the names are given in regular sequence, which is by no means certain, there is nothing to show where the collector made his first call.

The only clue—if it is worthy of being called one—is that the name of the Duke of Bedford is almost in the middle of the list. The Duke lived at No. 15, one of the two central houses of the northern block, and as his name is farther down the list than that of Lord Chatham, who lived at No. 7, it is likely that the collector began at the western corner of Gay Street, which is the principal approach to The Circus from the older part of Bath, and worked his way round to Gay Street again. If he did this, and his lists were made with any sort of method, Gainsborough must have lived in the northern block of

The Circus, as his name is the third in order after that of the Duke of Bedford. The third house after the Duke's is to-day No. 18 The Circus, and it is curious that Shum, writing nearly forty years ago, should have placed Gainsborough "either at Dr. Spender's, No. 17, or at one of the houses on either side." Shum, like Peach, gives no reason for his statement, but it is possible that he may have seen the Walcot rate-book from which I have quoted.

The identification of the house in The Circus is made difficult to-day by the fact that when Gainsborough lived in Bath the principal streets were not numbered. It was customary for the dweller in The Circus to give his address in some such fashion as "the third door from Gay Street," or "the second door from Bennett Street in the Northward Flank," but Gainsborough himself seems to have thought addresses of very little consequence. His advertisement of the "neat dwelling house" is the only instance I know of in which he mentions The Circus by name, and it is only twice referred to in all the existing correspondence by, and about him. His own address was "Mr. Gainsborough, Bath," and some of the letters written by him from Bath to the great actor who was his friend and patron, have nothing on the outer sheets but "David Garrick, Esq., London," and the postmark.

Although with our present knowledge it is impossible to say exactly which house in The Circus Gainsborough occupied, there is good reason for doubting that it was No. 24, the house in the south-eastern block which now bears the memorial tablet. The reason is to be found in another contemporary advertisement. In the *Bath Chronicle* of February 27, 1772, Mr. Evatt, a Bath auctioneer, announces the forthcoming sale of the furniture and entire contents of a house in The Circus. These include numbers of handsome cabinets, tables, "sophas" and mirrors; and silk-damask window curtains, "aether" down quilts, pictures, and "a library of books." All are

described as " The property of a gentleman, to be sold at his house, the seventh door in The Circus on the right from Gay Street." The seventh door in The Circus on the right from Gay Street is that of No. 24. It seems from this that Gainsborough could not have been living at No. 24 in the spring of 1772, unless we can believe that he was the gentleman to whom the furniture belonged, and that he sold by auction everything in his house more than two years before he left Bath for London.

Gainsborough, when he settled in Bath, found his chief rival in William Hoare, afterwards a Royal Academician, who had long enjoyed the principal patronage of the place. The elder Pitt was among the admirers of William Hoare, and gave some good commissions to him and to his brother, Prince Hoare. However, in spite of rival artists, Gainsborough was in full practice as a portrait-painter within twelve months after he left Ipswich, as we know from the correspondence of Mrs. Delany, who, on the 23rd of October 1760, writes from Bath to her friend Mrs. Dewes :

" This morning went with Lady Westmoreland to see Mr. Gainsborough's pictures (the man that painted Mr. Wise and Mr. Lucy), and they may well be called what Mr. Webb *unjustly* says of Rubens, ' they are *splendid impositions*.' There I saw Miss Ford's picture, a whole length with her guitar, a most extraordinary figure, handsome and bold ; but I should be very sorry to have any one I loved set forth in such a manner."

Miss Ford afterwards became the wife of Philip Thicknesse, and the portrait mentioned is the one to which the ex-Governor refers in his sketch of Gainsborough's life, when dealing with the misunderstanding with the artist at Bath in 1774. It is still in existence, and was exhibited in 1894 at the Winter Exhibition of the Royal Academy. The portrait is particularly interesting as one of the first fruits of the painter's Bath period, in which his genius developed in a manner that was little short of

miraculous. The word genius is frequently misapplied when speaking of painters, but if any one of them has a claim to that title it is surely Gainsborough. There is nothing in the history of the English School to be compared with his career. A country boy, he is sent at thirteen to study art in London at a time when opportunities for learning to draw and paint were few and poor. He picks up what crumbs of instruction he can, and at eighteen goes back to Suffolk, where he lives for fourteen years in dull country towns, cut off from the society of artists, unless we can distinguish by that title the house and coach-painters, Joshua Kirby and Andrew Baldrey. From Ipswich Gainsborough passes to Bath, and without any further experience except such as he may have acquired by seeing pictures in private collections begins almost at once to produce those remarkable portraits, the painting of which places him with Reynolds at the head of the English School.

Eighteen months after his arrival at Bath Gainsborough for the first time challenged the criticism of London artists by sending to the exhibition at Spring Gardens a full-length portrait of Mr. Nugent. This was in April 1761, when by a happy coincidence his friend Joshua Kirby was also attracting public attention. Kirby was at this time honoured by an audience with the King, and presented to his Majesty in person a copy of his new work on perspective. In 1762 Gainsborough sent a second picture to Spring Gardens, where the catalogue of the Society of Artists was this year graced by an introduction from the pen of Dr. Johnson. This second picture brought forth the earliest newspaper criticism of Gainsborough's work that I have been able to trace. It is in the *St. James's Chronicle.* "Mr. Gainsborough. No. 30. A whole length of a Gentleman with a Gun. A good portrait and a Pleasing Likeness of Mr. Poyntz. The Dog well done." Thus encouraged the young painter sent three pictures to the exhibition

of 1763, a landscape and portraits of Miss Edgeworth's relative, Mr. Medlicott, and of Quin the actor, who was at this time living at Bath. It is curious that Walpole in criticising Gainsborough's work at this exhibition attributes what he regards as a fault to the influence of the man who was to be his lifelong rival. Walpole is, I think, mistaken, but his note is interesting as the first known instance of the association of the names of Reynolds and Gainsborough. Walpole praises the portrait of Mr. Medlicott, but says that Gainsborough's landscape is tawdry, "a fault most of the landscape painters have caught from Reynolds."

Mr. Poyntz, who was one of the sitters of 1762, was the uncle of Miss Georgiana Spencer, then a child of five or six, of whom Gainsborough painted at this time a portrait that is now at Althorp. Years afterwards this little girl, grown into the most famous beauty of her time, sat to him again as Duchess of Devonshire.

It was in the early years at Bath that the friendship began between Gainsborough and Garrick, a friendship that remained unbroken until the death of the actor in 1779. Gainsborough's opinion of Garrick was extravagantly good, as he shows in his letters to Henderson. "Garrick," he says, "is the greatest creature living in every respect: he is worth studying in every action. Every view and every idea of him is worthy of being stored up for imitation; and I have ever found him a sincere and generous friend." A letter written by Garrick in 1763, immediately after the exhibition of Gainsborough's portrait of Quin, shows that it had attracted considerable attention in London, and had aroused the jealousy of some of the older painters in the metropolis. The letter, which throws some light on the character of Hudson, the teacher of Sir Joshua Reynolds, is dated June 20, 1763. Garrick writes from London to Quin at Bath:

"I must say a word or two upon the behaviour, the most unaccountable behaviour, of your friend Hudson;

you remember our bargain, and although partly made in the warmth of our cups last summer, yet it was as sacred to me as if it had been struck and ratified over our tea and toast and butter. I sent to him, as we agreed, to let him know when I should be ready to sit to him; he was not at that time disengaged. I then wrote to him that I would attend his friendly summons (those were my words) any morning at his own hour by giving me notice over-night—no answer to this. I then met him in Maiden Lane; he begged my pardon and seemed in high good humour and promised to send to me. From that time to this I have not had the least excuse or message from him, and I shall tell him my mind when I see him. I have considered again and again whether I might inadvertently have given him any slight cause for suspicion—for as you know he is a sensitive plant (and not a sensible plant as a lady called it in our garden)—and upon my honour I have behaved with the most delicate attention to him.

"It was hinted to me that the much, and deservedly, admired picture of you by Gainsborough has piqued him not a little, and *hinc illæ lacrimæ!* If it is so I sincerely pity him, for there is merit sufficient in that portrait to warm the most stoical painter, and what must it do when it works among the combustibles of our friend Hudson?"

The portrait of Quin became the property later of Walter Wiltshire, the Bath carrier in whom Gainsborough found a friend and patron. Allan Cunningham in his gossip about Gainsborough and "the honest carrier," who is said to have charged the artist nothing for taking his pictures to town, conveys a wrong impression of Mr. Wiltshire's position. Cunningham's description gives the idea of a man who drove his own horse and cart, but in reality Wiltshire was a kind of West Country Pickford, who had a large and flourishing business and regular services of waggons, "flying" and otherwise, between his warehouses in Broad Street, Bath, and the White Swan at Holborn Bridge. He was one of Bath's important citizens, and when he was elected Mayor in

1772, he gave a fashionable entertainment to the gentry and others at the Town Hall that caused much offence to "the people in trade" who were not invited. Gainsborough no doubt was present, for he was a frequent guest of Wiltshire's at his seat at Shockerwick, a few miles from Bath. Wiltshire acquired many pictures by Gainsborough, some of which remained at Shockerwick for two or three generations. The Wiltshire collection was dispersed at Christie's in 1867, when Quin's portrait was purchased by the Duke of Cleveland for 132 guineas. This portrait was described in the catalogue of the sale as having been bequeathed by Gainsborough to Wiltshire, and the story has been generally accepted. It is, however, without foundation, as Gainsborough made no bequests outside his own family. The beautiful study of *Orpin, Parish Clerk of Bradford, Wiltshire*, was bought for 310 guineas on behalf of the National Gallery, whose Director made a brave effort to obtain a more famous Gainsborough, *The Harvest Waggon*, but was outbid by a dealer, who secured the prize for 2950 guineas.

It is well known that *The Harvest Waggon* was given by Gainsborough to Wiltshire, who had previously presented him with the grey horse shown in the picture. I found some new information about this transaction in a manuscript note by the late J. H. Anderdon, to whom we owe the compilation of the useful "extended" Academy catalogues at Burlington House and the British Museum. Anderdon, when at Bath in 1841, made the acquaintance of the carrier's son, to whom the Shockerwick estate and pictures had descended, and Mr. Wiltshire told him that the grey horse was one that Gainsborough had been accustomed to ride. When he removed to London in the summer of 1774 he took the horse with him, and as he could not induce the carrier to accept fifty guineas for the animal, sent him the picture instead.

A frequent companion of Gainsborough in his rides in the neighbourhood of Bath was Sir Uvedale Price,

who has left us an interesting note on the character of the painter and the soothing effect upon his mind of the rustic scenery he loved so well to paint. "When Gainsborough lived at Bath," says Sir Uvedale, "I often made excursions with him into the country around. He was a man of eager, irritable mind, though he attached himself warmly to those he liked. Though of a lively and playful imagination yet was he at times severe and sarcastic, but when we have come near to cottages and village scenes with groups of children, and objects of rural life that struck his fancy, I have observed his countenance to take an expression of gentleness and complacency."

Quin, who was always on the best of terms with Gainsborough, and left him a legacy, is mentioned by the painter in a letter written a few weeks after Garrick wrote to praise the portrait in the London exhibition and to complain of Hudson. Gainsborough's letter is addressed to Lord Royston, the eldest son of the great lawyer, Lord Hardwicke, who was both Lord Chancellor and the father of a Lord Chancellor.

"Bath, *July* 21, 1763.

"My Lord,—I should have answered your Lordship's obliging letter sooner, but was from home when it came and returned but yesterday. I am now about your Lordship's picture, and shall spare no pains to make it as good a picture as I possibly can; but for fear I should not be able to complete it in time enough for Lord Hardwicke to have it at his country house when his Lordship leaves town I should be much obliged if your Lordship will be pleased to give orders that it may not be opened in London but forwarded immediately on its arrival, into the country, as I shall paper it up to secure the dust from lodging on the surface of the picture. The payment of the money would be soon enough when your Lordship comes again to Bath. But, if your Lordship is uneasy till the debt is discharged, Mr. Hoare, Banker at Temple Bar, will give a proper receipt in my name.

"His Grace the Duke of Devonshire left Bath about

three weeks since, and Mr. Quin told me he himself was going to Chatsworth to stay a few weeks. Dr. Moisy (Moysey) has had a severe fit of the ague, and (as I am told) says he could make himself very easy with the loss of his money if he could get rid of the ague. But whether the loss of his money might not bring on a shaking fit that formed itself into an ague, I must leave.

"I am, your Lordship's most obedient and most obliged humble servant,

"THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH."

The reference in this letter to Gainsborough's banker is, I believe, the only one that is to be found in his correspondence. The bank of Messrs. Hoare "at Temple Bar" is as familiar to Londoners to-day as it was to their predecessors of a hundred and fifty years ago, and the ledgers are still in existence in which Gainsborough's transactions are recorded. They show that the remainder of the money owing by Lord Royston to Gainsborough was twenty guineas, and that the sum remained unpaid until August 1764, by which time Lord Hardwicke was dead and Lord Royston had succeeded to the Earldom. Gainsborough opened an account with Messrs. Hoare in 1762, and his name remained on their books until 1785, but his dealings with the firm were not extensive, although in one respect peculiarly interesting. The painter could have had little occasion for a banker's services, for he was not a man of business and most of his receipts and payments were probably in cash. His account with Messrs. Hoare dealt almost exclusively with an annuity payable to him, of £200 a year. This, no doubt, was the mysterious annuity of that amount which was left to Mrs. Gainsborough by some one whose name has never transpired. Gainsborough's daughters told an informant of Fulcher's that the annuity was regularly transmitted through a London bank, but that they knew nothing of the source from whence it came. Messrs. Hoare, to whose courtesy I am much indebted for the particulars concerning Gainsborough's account, were

kind enough to search their books with a view to obtaining further information about his addresses at Bath, but the search, unfortunately, proved fruitless.

It is interesting to recall here that several members of the Hoare family were numbered among Gainsborough's patrons. Mr. Henry Hoare, the banker of Temple Bar with whom the account was opened in 1762, had a gallery of pictures in his country house at Stourhead, Wiltshire, and his collection was the first of importance to which a landscape by Gainsborough was admitted.

The *Bath Journal*, which, in common with its rival the *Bath Chronicle*, rarely mentioned Gainsborough, broke through its reserve in this year of 1763 by a surprising announcement that must have caused some anxiety to the artist's friends. In its issue of October 17th, the *Bath Journal* published the following among other notes on the events of the preceding week: "Friday—The same day died Mr. Gainsborough, an eminent Painter of this City." This curt statement was followed by an equally curt correction in the paper of October 24. "Mr. Gainsborough, an eminent Limner of this City, is not dead as mentioned in our last."

Gilly Williams, in a letter written in 1764, gives a curious glimpse of some of the odd people who were among Gainsborough's sitters at this time. "Sir Onesiphorus Paul and his Lady are the finest couple that has been seen here since Bath was built. They have bespoke two whole length pictures which some time or other will divert us. His dress and manner are beyond my painting; however, they may come within Mr. Gainsborough's; that is the painter by whom, if you remember, we once saw the caricature of old Winchelsea." Unfortunately Gainsborough did not send the portrait of Sir Onesiphorus to divert the Society of Artists. It was never exhibited, and his only contribution to Spring Gardens in 1764 was a portrait, said to have been that of Joshua Kirby.

In January, 1765, the King granted a charter of incorporation to the Society of Artists, and on the 11th of March Gainsborough came up from Bath to London to attend the general meeting of the Society at the Turk's Head Tavern, Soho, and after signing the obligation was formally admitted a Fellow. When the annual exhibition at Spring Gardens was opened a few weeks later, the *Public Advertiser* invited its readers to criticise the gallery, where Gainsborough was showing portraits of General Honywood and Colonel Nugent. The invitation brought forth only a single letter, from "N," but this happens to be about the large equestrian study of General Honywood, whom Gainsborough depicted riding through a forest. "N" writes:

"In consequence of the general invitation to your correspondents to send you remarks on the present exhibition at Spring Gardens, give me leave to tell you that I have been to see it, and on looking at the much admired picture of General Honywood on horseback, done by Gainsborough, I found a scabbard to the General's sword wanting. He is painted in full regimentals with his broad-sword in his hand, and as his left side is presented to you anybody must be judge of this impropriety."

The omission of the scabbard, evidently regarded at the time as an error on the part of the artist, is noticed by Fulcher as "an implied compliment, perchance, to the General's bravery."

A portrait of Garrick, perhaps the one now in the possession of the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon, was shown at Gainsborough's studio in the early spring of 1766, and was the subject of some foolish lines attributed to the pen of Derrick, the Master of the Ceremonies at Bath. The Garrick, with two other portraits and a landscape, were sent to London and exhibited at Spring Gardens in April, when for the first time Gainsborough's work was unkindly criticised in print. The offending journal was the before-mentioned *Public Advertiser*,

GENERAL HONYWOOD

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which in noticing " A Gentleman, Whole Length " (50), by Gainsborough, says :

" This Gentleman it seems is done for Mr. Garrick, as he has his arm about a stone bust of Shakespeare ; and indeed he seems as fond of it as if some benevolent God had metamorphosized him into the same substance. Mr. Gainsborough should have been particularly careful how he had drawn from an original which a Reynolds and a Zoffani hath so admirably pourtrayed ; however, he has been more happy in his other whole length of a gentleman, and in his others equally miserable. I fancy Mr. Gainsborough has been troubled with ague lately, or got the falling sickness."

Fulcher says that this was the portrait of Garrick in the painting of which the actor annoyed and puzzled Gainsborough by contorting and twisting his face. The story of Garrick's behaviour is not credited by Fulcher, but it may have some foundation. Thicknesse, who was living at Bath when the portrait was in progress, says that Gainsborough excused himself on this account for what he regarded as his failure in painting Garrick ; and the able writer of the obituary of Gainsborough in the *Morning Chronicle* gives the same story, which he had from the lips of the painter himself. " He told me," says this writer, " that he never found any portrait so difficult to hit as that of the late Mr. Garrick, for when he was sketching in the eyebrows and thought he had hit upon the precise situation and then looked a second time at the model he found the eyebrows lifted up to the middle of the forehead ; and when he looked a third time they were dropped like a curtain, close over the eye. So flexible and universal was the countenance of this great player that it was as impossible to catch his likeness as it is to catch the form of a passing cloud."

The other " whole length of a gentleman " in the exhibition of 1766 is unidentified by Mr. Algernon Graves in his dictionary of contributors to the Royal Academy, but it represented Dr. Charlton, a well-known Bath

physician who will reappear later in these pages as one of the medical men called in to prescribe for Gainsborough's daughter Margaret. Thicknesse, in his book of *Characters*, published in 1770, refers to this portrait. In a list of people whose past misdeeds he is raking up he says that Dr. C—rl—on ought to have been ashamed of himself "when he employed Mr. Gainsborough to enable him to exhibit his full length Portrait in the exhibition room at Spring Gardens." This can only refer to the exhibition of 1766, as all the full lengths shown at Spring Gardens in other years have been identified. Ozias Humphry, R.A., who was living at Bath, and on very intimate terms with Gainsborough, when Dr. Charlton's portrait was painted, describes it as a work of singular power. "It was a walking figure in a familiar dress, and absolutely seemed, when first entering the room, like a living person."

This exhibition at Spring Gardens was the subject of a descriptive pamphlet in verse, entitled, *A Candid Display of the Genius and Merits of the several Masters whose works are now offered to the Public at Spring Gardens. By an Impartial Hand.* It was sold at the exhibition rooms at a shilling a copy. The critic's reference to Gainsborough, who is bracketed with Reynolds, is slight but flattering:

> "There Gainsborough shines, much honoured name,
> There veteran Reynolds, worthy of his fame."

The reference to a veteran could not have been pleasing to Reynolds, who was at this time only forty-three years old and still a long way from his zenith.

To the "Impartial Hand," responsible for the pamphlet, the works of art that appealed most were the productions of William Peters, who afterwards wound up a career, in the course of which he painted many pictures of questionable taste, by taking orders and accepting the chaplaincy of the Royal Academy, of which institution he had previously become a member.

Although Reynolds and Gainsborough, the stars of the exhibition of 1766, are allowed by the "Impartial Hand" only a couplet between them, Peters is praised effusively in twenty lines of verse.

Among Gainsborough's Bath friends at this time was the Rev. Richard Graves, the author of *The Spiritual Quixote*, who in some lines written in 1766 shows that the artist had brought into temporary fashion the practice of painting lovers amid rustic or garden surroundings. Graves, whose lines are addressed to "A Limner at Bath: Equally excellent in Portraits and landscapes," indulges in a rhapsody about the "crystal founts and amaranthine bowers" of the Garden of Eden, and compares Gainsborough's pictured lovers with Adam and Eve:

> "Like that bless'd pair, by G—nsb—gh's pencil drawn,
> Here each fond couple treads the flow'ry lawn."

He explains in a footnote that Gainsborough has painted "several ladies and gentlemen drawn in that taste."

CHAPTER III

BATH, 1767–1768

Gainsborough removes to The Circus—Smollett on The Circus—Joshua Kirby and George the Third—Exhibition of supposed picture by the King—An artistic sensation—Gainsborough and a minor poet—The poet's resentment and sarcastic verses—A duel suggested—William Jackson of Exeter introduced to Gainsborough by Collins—Jackson on Gainsborough's music—Gainsborough's letters to him—Drawing paper—Letter to the Duke of Bedford—Letter to Garrick about Shakespeare—Gainsborough's correspondence—Unfair criticism by Theodore Hook—Singing at first sight.

THE Circus, to which Gainsborough removed about Christmas 1766, was designed by John Wood, the architect to whose taste and skill Bath owes some of its finest and most characteristic features. It is composed of thirty large houses of Bath stone built in a circle, and adorned with columns on the ground, first, and second floors. Gainsborough's new house, like the one he had recently left in Lansdowne Road, was on the high ground to the north of the city, and some distance from the baths and places of entertainment, which at that time were all grouped together in the older and lower part of the town. It is curious that a fashionable portrait-painter like Gainsborough should have chosen to settle so far from the locality whence he drew most of his patronage, and where the gay crowd that thronged Bath from October to April spent most of its idle hours. Not only was The Circus some distance from the centre of things in Bath but the means of access to it were far from good.

In *Humphry Clinker*, Smollett describes carefully the Bath of Gainsborough's day, and he makes Matthew Bramble speak of The Circus as most inconveniently situated. "The only entrance to it," he says, "through

Gay Street, is so difficult, steep, and slippery, that in wet weather it must be exceedingly dangerous both for those who ride in carriages and those who walk on foot, and when the street is covered with snow I don't see how any individual can go up or down without the most imminent danger of broken bones." Smollett had himself witnessed the difficulties of approaching The Circus in bad weather, as he lodged in Gay Street when he spent the winter of 1766 in Bath. The position of Gainsborough's house was the more unfortunate because the principal season at Bath was in the winter, and most of his sitters had to climb, or be carried, up a steep hill over roads that were notoriously bad at a time when no English roads were good. Beattie, when he visited Bath some years later and paid the city the highest compliment in the power of a Scotsman by comparing it with Edinburgh, had nothing good to say about its roads. "The soil," said Beattie, "is white chalk, which on the surface of the ground is pounded by the feet of animals and the wheels of carriages into fine powder, which in dry weather is continually flying about; in wet weather it covers all the streets with a deep mire."

On the other hand, Gainsborough found some patronage in the new neighbourhood in which he had fixed his dwelling-place, for The Circus, although in the suburbs, was already fashionable. Clive took a house there after his return from India; the elder Pitt, who was member of Parliament for Bath for some years before he entered the Upper House as Lord Chatham, lived at what is now known as No. 7; and the fourth Duke of Bedford, who resided in Bath in the hope that his health might be restored by the waters, occupied, as I have already stated, one of the two central mansions in the northern block of The Circus. One of the several houses in The Circus which have been assigned by tradition to Gainsborough adjoins that formerly tenanted by the Duke, and it is therefore possible that his Grace and the painter

were next-door neighbours. If this were so, it might account for the familiar fashion of Gainsborough's letter to the Duke of Bedford in 1768, soliciting his interest on behalf of the composer William Jackson of Exeter, and written, as the artist admits, with " monstrous freedom."

The houses in The Circus, though large, do not seem well adapted for the residence of a portrait-painter who wished to use one of the rooms as a studio. At No. 24, the house now adorned, I think erroneously, with the Gainsborough tablet, the only possible apartment for this purpose is the front room on the first floor, which is lighted by three windows of no great size. The back of the house is useless, as it faces south-east and has the sun on its windows all the morning. It is a strange thing that of all Gainsborough's sitters or friends not one tells us anything of consequence about the situation or arrangement of his studio, except that it was dimly lighted. J. T. Smith, in his life of Nollekens the sculptor, speaks of visits to the house in Pall Mall, but unfortunately says little about the painting room in which as a boy he saw Gainsborough at work, and no visitor to the Bath studio has been any more communicative. It has been suggested that Gainsborough may have lived at The Circus and painted his portraits in a studio nearer to the centre of Bath, but this does not agree with the definite statement of Thicknesse. He says that when he called one morning at the painter's house, accompanied by Mrs. Thicknesse, " Mr. Gainsborough invited her up into his picture room, saying, ' Madame, I have something to show you.' "

From his new studio Gainsborough sent four pictures to the exhibition held in Spring Gardens in April and May, 1767. These were full lengths of Lady Grosvenor, the Duke of Argyll, and Mr. Vernon ; and a *Landskip and Figures*, in which Walpole found something to admire. " The landscape," he said, " is very rich, the group of figures delightfully managed, and the horses well drawn ;

the distant hill is one tint too dark." These pictures did not attract much attention from the newspaper critics, and the only reference I have found to them is a brief mention in the *Universal Museum*, "Gainsborough has various merits, but is unequal."

But if Gainsborough's work at Spring Gardens in 1767 made no great stir, a picture in the same exhibition by his Ipswich friend Joshua Kirby was for a time the talk of the town, though not because of its merits. A story was in circulation (and does not seem to have been contradicted) that the King was the real author of one of the landscapes exhibited by Kirby, who was in close touch with, and constantly employed by the Court. "It is assured," declared a writer in the *London Chronicle*, "that a picture in the exhibition of paintings at Spring Gardens is the sole production of a very great personage, and introduced into the catalogue under a feigned name." The suspected picture was *An Evening View of Kew Ferry*, exhibited by Joshua Kirby, whose house at Kew adjoined the Ferry steps.

We now come to an incident in the life of Gainsborough which is not mentioned by any of his biographers. It is a quarrel between the painter and a minor poet, which although ridiculous in its commencement, in the end brought the two men to the verge of a hostile meeting. In the spring of 1767, soon after Gainsborough had removed to The Circus, the visitors to Bath included a young man named Underwood. He had recently left Cambridge, and was now, in the intervals of ample leisure, following in a half-amateur fashion the pursuit of literature. Underwood, who had many acquaintances among the writers and actors of the day, possessed a rhyming faculty that made easy to him the composition of mediocre verse. At Bath he was introduced to Gainsborough, with whom he became on such friendly terms that the artist offered to paint his portrait at full length without any charge, and send it to the exhibition at Spring Gardens.

This, at least, was how the poet understood the offer, but the sequel shows that Gainsborough, if he said anything about painting a portrait, did not intend that his promise should be taken seriously. The story is told by Underwood in a small volume of verse printed by subscription in 1768 at Bath, where its publication was the cause of some amusement to the residents and visitors, and much annoyance to Gainsborough.

Garrick, Foote, George Colman, Dr. Schomberg, and Derrick, the Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, were all numbered among the subscribers to Underwood's volume of *Satyric Poems, Epigrams, Poetic Epistles, &c.*, of several of which Gainsborough is the object. The first verses that concern the artist are in the form of "A Poetic Epistle, Address'd to Mr. Gainsborough, Painter at Bath, in which the author reminds him of his promise made in April last to present him with a whole-length picture." This letter, which is couched in the most friendly terms, was written in September, 1767. It commences thus :

> "Presuming upon Friendship shown,
> In April last at Bath when down.
> I should ere now addressed a letter
> (Perhaps like this for want of better),
> And begged to be indulged the reason
> You came not up in May's fair season?"

Underwood goes on to explain that he has not written earlier on account of a severe illness, but that he has now recovered completely and ventures to recall Gainsborough's offer, and to advise him that he hopes soon to call upon him at Bath.

> "A fortnight from this date I mean
> To quit this busy, bustling scene.
> . . . . .
> I mean to pass the Severn tide
> And visit friend on other side,
> And if your leisure time permit,
> For season scarce commences yet,

I should be proud of your display,
For Bath, of course, is in my way.
But if the times are pressing still
And shoals demand your wondrous skill,
Contented till a future day
Your jingling scribbler, U., must stay."

But Gainsborough, who was almost foolishly generous in giving away pictures, and painting his friends for nothing, disclaimed all intention of offering sittings to the poet, and told Underwood so in plain words when he made his appearance at The Circus. Underwood, in a scornful footnote to the reprint of the first, and friendly letter, from which I have given extracts, reminds Gainsborough of his alleged discourtesy. "The Author takes this opportunity to thank the *Gentleman* for his *strict attention* to his promise, and the very *genteel ingenuous reception* he has since met with from him, and at the same time assures him that he is preparing with all convenient dispatch the *public retort* which he has already *privately engaged* to treat him with." After the rupture Underwood went for a time to Wales. He returned to Bath in October, and spent two months there worrying all his friends and acquaintances to subscribe to his book, and quarrelling with the editors of the local papers because they would not accept his contributions. A letter in verse sent by Underwood in the autumn to a friend in London refers again to the dispute :

"A piece of news for private ear—
No matter—shortly will appear
As public as a press can make it,
And therefore let the winds all take it.
Gainsbro,' an artist in this place,
I told you was to draw my face,
And *gratis* promised to supply
A picture for the Public Eye.
Apostate-like denies his word,
In fine has acted so absurd
And treated me with such neglect,
Though I've behaved with all respect

That I've engaged—am in advance,
To treat him with Satyric Dance.
In manner on Churchillian Plan
I'll lash the *petty Gentleman*,
A second Hogarth to your view
When maul'd in my corroding stew
His usage he shall quickly rue."

An attempt to reconcile the disputants was made by Simon Pine, the miniature painter, who lived at Bath; but it was unsuccessful, and Pine himself became the object of the poet's spiteful attacks. Underwood reminds Pine of Gay's warning of the fate of those who interfere in quarrels, and adds :

"But little did I think, friend P . . e
(You see I've hitched you in a line),
Would so forget himself and Bard
For whom he had preferred regard
As to neglect this golden rule
And thus display the meddling Fool.
Impertinent, officious, wrong
(Much better had he held his tongue),
For let your *Brother Artist* know
Since 'tis himself that nerves my bow
The promised shaft ere long shall wing,
For you've but doubly braced the string ;
In the meantime his dapper squire,
Composed of true Pacific Fire,
May fetch and carry, bluster, swear—
But all in vain—he hectors air."

Underwood, in a brief passage in prose that follows this rhymed invective, says : "This *worthy Confidant* was so nettled at the Author's retort determination that he declared he would bring any message whatever from Mr. Gainsborough." The poet follows an advertisement of his book in the *St. James's Chronicle* by an announcement that "shortly will be published by the same Author 'An epistle to Thomas Gainsborough, Painter, Bath,'" but I have not succeeded in tracing any record of its appearance. Gainsborough's comment on the affair is to be found in a postscript to an undated letter to Garrick

—the one in which he protests that he will allow no one but himself to present a portrait of the actor to their common friend Clutterbuck. The postscript is short but to the point, " Damn Underwood ! "

Gainsborough, in Underwood's first letter, is asked by the poet why he failed to come up to town " in May's fair season," and the way in which the question is put seems to suggest that it may have been the custom of the artist to visit London in the early summer, when sitters at Bath were probably few and far between. In that case it is not unlikely that he executed commissions in town long before he settled in Pall Mall in 1774. There is a hint of this in a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth, quoted in a later chapter, in which Gainsborough offers to repaint a portrait of Lady Dartmouth, " when I can be in London for that purpose."

One of the poems in Underwood's little volume is addressed to William Jackson of Exeter, " on hearing the *Lycidas* of Milton performed at Bath under his direction, and the music of his own composing, at Gyde's Room, November, 1767." It was an occasion upon which Gainsborough was sure to be present, for the performers included his friend Giardini, the violinist, whom he had known at Ipswich ; and the Linley family, father, son, and daughter, the last that incomparable singer and beautiful woman who figures on some of Gainsborough's finest canvases. The conductor of the Bath concert was the composer of the well-known *Te Deum*, with whom Gainsborough had recently commenced the intimacy that only ended with the painter's death more than twenty years afterwards. The sympathy between the men was twofold, for just as Gainsborough adored music, Jackson loved to handle the brush, and even exhibited at the Royal Academy.

William Jackson when a young man made the acquaintance of a miniature painter named Collins, who came to Exeter just at the time when the musician was

endeavouring, with small success, to add drawing and painting to his other accomplishments. "Collins possessed," says Jackson, "a great command of the black lead pencil, and a happy talent for making washed drawings of groups of figures in the humorous style. He saw that I was wrong, and was always saying it, but he never informed me how to be right. By his means I became acquainted with Gainsborough." The miniature painter who introduced Jackson to Gainsborough was probably Samuel Collins, who practised for some years at Bath. Collins, who was the master of Ozias Humphry, R.A., appears to have been on intimate terms with Gainsborough, who painted his portrait and gave him a drawing of a landscape that is now in the British Museum.

Jackson's opinion of his own brushwork does not appear to have agreed with that of his artist friends, and it has been said that this inappreciation was a sore point in his relations with Gainsborough, and the cause of his disparaging remarks, made in after years, on the painter's accomplishment in music. Jackson began to paint in oils when he was twenty-seven, but made slow progress. He speaks of his earlier pictures as not deficient in design and colour, but ill-painted, as he was perfectly ignorant of the mechanical part of the profession. "Nor," says he, "did I ever receive a hint from any artist of my acquaintance how to correct my touch." Even his friend Gainsborough gave him no help, although Jackson presented the painter with a picture from his own hand. Jackson says that this picture of his was among those disposed of in the sale at Gainsborough's house after his death, and adds with much satisfaction that "it occasioned many guesses at the painter." Although the musician complains of his neglect by artists some of them were always numbered among his friends, and in the course of his long life he sat to Gainsborough, Keenan, Ozias Humphry, Morland, and Opie. He does not appear to have been painted by Sir Joshua, although

he knew him well (Fanny Burney mentions meeting Jackson at the President's house), and left among some autobiographical notes an interesting comparison of the opinions on landscape of Reynolds and Gainsborough. Jackson says: "Sir Joshua always considered Claude as the Raffaele of landscape painting, but Claude was no favourite with Gainsborough. He thought his pencilling tame and insipid."

William Jackson's grotesque account of Gainsborough's supposed adventures with musicians—the Welsh harper, Professor Straub the theorbo player, and many others, has been quoted frequently and largely in most of the painter's biographies. I do not repeat these spiteful and too familiar stories, because there is good reason to believe that they give an inaccurate and most unfair description of Gainsborough's musical knowledge. Further comments on this subject and on Gainsborough as a musician are to be found in the chapter of *Notes and Anecdotes*. Gainsborough makes many references to music in the twelve letters to Jackson, full of banter and gossip, that are now the property of the Royal Academy. On the cover of one of them William Jackson has written, "This parcel of letters are kept for my brother, Thomas Jackson, if ever he returns to England, but if not during my life, they should be destroyed." Thomas Jackson, who was in the diplomatic service, and was at one time British Minister to Turin, received the letters, which afterwards came into the possession of one of his great nieces, by whom they were sold to the Royal Academy about thirty years ago. Two or three of them have been mutilated at some earlier period. Portions at the ends of the sheets have been torn off, perhaps for the sake of the signatures.

Gainsborough says little about his painting in his correspondence with Jackson, whom he thanks sometimes for helping him with his musical studies, but he mentions in 1768 that he is beginning the portraits of Tom Linley

and his sister—afterwards Mrs. Sheridan. In other letters he teases Jackson about a supposed fall when riding, thanks him for a present of indigo, offers him a bed whenever he may be in Bath, and recommends him, if music does not satisfy him, to try drapery painting for artists, an occupation at which money could be made. But interesting as they are the letters do not throw much light on Gainsborough's life, and their biographical usefulness is further discounted by the fact that few of them bear dates. Nevertheless, they are of great value for their revelations concerning Gainsborough's tastes and feelings, for to the Exeter musician the painter seems to have expressed his thoughts unreservedly. They are all given in the Appendix, but with slight expurgations, for Gainsborough's intimate letters sometimes contain coarse expressions. This, perhaps, is why so few have been preserved. The letters, for example, written to Samuel Kilderbee, "brilliant but eccentric, and too licentious to be published," have long been lost sight of, and were probably destroyed by Kilderbee's heirs. In the Jackson letters, fortunately, coarse touches are infrequent.

A letter written by Gainsborough at the end of November, 1767, shows that in searching for a paper suitable for wash drawings his attention had been called to Anstey's *New Bath Guide*, then in the full tide of popularity. It seemed to Gainsborough that the paper on which Anstey's verses were printed was eminently suitable for water-colour, and he wrote for some of it to Dodsley, of Pall Mall, the London publisher of the *New Bath Guide*. He obtained what he wanted, but was yet disappointed, as his letter of acknowledgment shows, by the unexpected wire-marks in the paper.

To Jas. Dodsley, Pall Mall, London.

BATH, *26th November*, 1767.

SIR,—I beg you to accept my sincerest thanks for the favour you have done me concerning the paper for draw-

ings. I had set my heart upon getting some of it, as it is so completely what I have long been in search of. The mischief of that you were so kind as to enclose is not only the small wires but a large cross wire . . . which the other has none of, nor hardly any impression of the smallest wire. I wish, Sir, that one of my landskips, such as I could make you upon that paper, would prove a sufficient inducement for you to make still further inquiry. I should think my time well bestowed, however little the value you might with reason set upon it.—I am, Sir, your much obliged and most obedient humble servant,

THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

P.S.—I am at this moment viewing the difference of that you sent and the Bath guide, holding them edgeways to the light, and could cry my eyes out to see those furrows. Upon my honour I would give a guinea a quire for a dozen quire of it.

In 1768 the newspapers paid little attention to the fine arts, and I have found no mention in any journal of Gainsborough's full-length portraits of Captain Needham and Captain Hervey, which he sent to Spring Gardens; or to another portrait shown in the autumn at a special exhibition held in honour of the King of Denmark's visit to London. Captain Hervey's portrait was seen recently at Burlington House, where it was catalogued as *Augustus John, third Earl of Bristol,* to which title the captain succeeded in 1775. The portraits of the two captains were the last works shown by Gainsborough at the Society of Artists. After 1768 all the pictures exhibited by him publicly in London were sent to the Royal Academy, with the exception of a portrait and two landscapes contributed to the gallery of the Free Society of Artists.

Certain passages in Gainsborough's letters to Jackson show that in the earlier years of their acquaintance the musician was uneasy about his present position, and far from happy about his future prospects. It was in this connection that Gainsborough suggested that if music

failed his friend might find remunerative occupation as a drapery painter. But Jackson wanted what he called "a certainty," in other words, a place, and Gainsborough, whose portrait-painting had brought him into close contact with some great people, endeavoured to obtain for the musician a post under Government that would always ensure him a competence. Jackson went to London in the spring of 1768 to apply for a receivership of taxes, and invited Gainsborough to come to town for a few days as his guest. Gainsborough wrote on the 11th of May regretting that the picture of the Linleys upon which he was engaged would prevent him from leaving Bath; but, apparently in answer to an urgent appeal of Jackson's, he sent on the 29th the following letter to the Duke of Bedford, who, as I have already stated, was his neighbour in The Circus.

"Bath, *May 29th*, 1768.

"My Lord Duke,—A most worthy honest man, and one of the greatest geniuses for musical compositions England ever produced, is now in London, and has got two or three Members of Parliament along with him out of Devonshire, to make application for one of the receivers of the land-tax of that county, now resigned by a very old man, one Mr. Haddy. His name is William Jackson; lives at Exeter; and for his plainness, truth, and ingenuity, at the same time, is beloved as no man ever was.

"Your Grace has doubtless heard his compositions, but he is no fiddler, your Grace may take my word for it; he is extremely clever and good, is a married man with a young family, and is qualified over and over again for the place; has got friends of fortune who will be bound for him in any sum; and they are all making application to his Grace the Duke of Grafton to get him this place. But, my Lord Duke, I told him they could not do it without me; that I must write to your Grace about it. He is at Mr. Arnold's, in Norfolk Street, in the Strand; and if your Grace would be pleased to think of it I should be ever bound to pray for your Grace. Your Grace knows that I am an *original*, and therefore I hope will be the more ready to pardon this monstrous freedom."

Gainsborough's letter may have been too free for the Duke, for Jackson did not get the receivership, but gained instead distinction as a composer, and doubtless a sufficient income.

At this time Gainsborough was at work for Garrick upon a picture of Shakespeare which probably was never finished. The nature of the commission and the reference to Stratford in one of Gainsborough's letters have led Fulcher and other writers to conclude that the picture in progress was intended for the Shakespeare Jubilee of 1769. This, however, could not have been the case, as I shall show in the next chapter, in the notes on the festival at Stratford-on-Avon. Gainsborough writes to Garrick in 1768 :

"DEAR SIR,—I take particular notice of your friendly anxiety for my recovery. I do assure you, and thank you most kindly for your *sharp* thought, but having had 12 oz. of blood taken immediately away, am perfectly recovered, strong in the back and able, so make your sublime self easy—I suppose your letter to Mr. Sharp was upon no other business, so have enclosed it—but, observe, I thank you sincerely.

"Shakespeare shall come forth forthwith, as the lawyer says. Damn the original picture of him, *with your leave*, for I think a stupider face, I never beheld, except D——k's.

"I intend, with your approbation, my dear friend, to take the form from his pictures and statues just enough to preserve his likeness *past the doubt of all blockheads* at first sight, and supply a *soul* from his works—it is impossible that such a mind and ray of heaven could shine with such a face and pair of eyes as that picture has ; so as I said before, damn that.

"I'm going to dinner, and after I'll try a sketch—I shall leave the *price* to you—I don't care whether I have a farthing if you will but let me do it—to be sure I should never ask you more than my portrait price (which is sixty guineas), but perhaps ought to ask less, as there is no confinement of painting from life ; but I say I leave it to you, promising to be contented *upon honour*. I could wish you to call, *upon any pretence*, any day after next Wednesday at the Duke of Montagu, because you'd

see the Duke and Duchess in my *last* manner; but not as if you thought anything of mine worth that trouble, only to see his Grace's landskip of Rubens, and the four Vandykes, whole length, in his Grace's dressing-room."

There is no date on this letter, except in an endorsement in Garrick's hand, "A letter from Gainsborough about Shakespeare and my picture, 1768," but it seems to have been written in the summer, some weeks before another letter, in which the painter reports the unsatisfactory progress of his work. But before quoting this second letter it is necessary to say something about the gross unfairness with which it has been treated by Theodore Hook, who contributed the notes to *Garrick's Correspondence*. To the garbled version in the *Correspondence* of Gainsborough's letter of August 22, 1768, Hook appends a footnote: "It is a pity that such a genius as Gainsborough should have dishonoured himself and sullied pure white paper with such profane filth." Nothing could be couched in stronger terms of reprobation than this note of Hook's, which is probably responsible for the prevailing impression that Gainsborough's correspondence with his intimates was full of impropriety. There are occasional touches of coarseness, as I pointed out in speaking of the Jackson letters, but nothing that can in any degree justify Hook's astonishing note, which suggests suppressed passages full of Rabelaisian images. I have copied the letter to which Hook takes exception, exactly to a comma from the original in Gainsborough's own hand, and now give it in its unexpurgated form. It will not shock any reader who remembers that it was written in the eighteenth century, when oaths were commonly used in conversation.

"Dear Sir,—I doubt I shall stand accused (if not accursed) all this time of my neglect of not going to Stratford, and giving you a line from thence as I promised; but Lord, what can one do such weather as this—continual rains; My genius is so dampt by it that I can do nothing to please me. I have been several days rubbing in &

rubbing out my design for Shakespeare, & damme if I think I shall let it go, or let you see it at last—I was willing like an ass as I am, to expose myself a little, out of the simple Portrait way, & had a notion of showing where that inimitable Poet had his Ideas from, by an immediate Ray darting down upon his Eye turn'd up for that purpose; but G.. damn it, I can make nothing of my Ideas there has been such a fall of rain from the same quarter—you shall not see it for I'll cut it out before you can come—tell me, Dear Sir, when you purpose coming to Bath, that I may be quick enough in my Motions. Shakespeare's Bust is a silly smiling thing, & I have not sense enough to make him more sensible in the Picture and so I tell ye, you shan't see it. I must make a plain Picture of him standing erect, and give it an old look as if it had been painted at the time he lived & there we shall fling 'em damme.

" Poor Mrs. Pritchard died here on Saturday night 11 o'clock—so now her performance being no longer present to those who must see and hear, before they can believe, will you know my dear sir—but I beg pardon, I forgot—Time puts us all into his Fobb, as I do my timekeeper, *watch* that my Dear.—Who am I but the same think you

" T. G.

" Impudent scoundrel says Mr. G.—Blackguard.

" BATH, *22nd August*, 1768."

An unintentionally amusing comment on this letter is to be found in one of the modern biographies of Garrick. The writer, who evidently had seen Theodore Hook's note, but not the original letter, speaks of Gainsborough's supposed coarseness, and reads his playful postscript as a reproach of Garrick's. He quotes a portion of the letter and prints in a footnote, " ' Impudent scoundrel,' adds Mr. Garrick." Mrs. Pritchard, whose death at Bath is announced in this letter, was the actress of whom Charles Dibdin wrote, " She was everywhere great, everywhere impressive, and everywhere feminine."

There is another letter written by Gainsborough to Garrick in the same summer, and referring to some work

executed by the painter for which he refuses to accept any further remuneration. Garrick seems to have endeavoured to force payment upon his friend for "this shabby performance" (as Gainsborough calls it), the nature of which is not stated. Writing from Bath on July 27, 1768, Gainsborough says, after reproving the actor for his "romantic whimsies": "I thought you knew me too well, you who can read hearts and faces both at a view, and that at first sight too. Come, if you will not plague me any more on this frightful subject, I will tell you a story about *first sight*. You must know, Sir, whilst I lived at Ipswich, there was a benefit concert at which a new song was to be introduced, and I being steward, went to the honest cabinet-maker who was our singer, instead of a better, and asked him if he could sing at sight, for that I had a new song with all the parts wrote out. 'Yes, Sir,' said he, 'I can.' Upon which I ordered Mr. Giardini of Ipswich to begin the symphony, and gave my signal for the attention of the company; but behold a dead silence followed the symphony instead of the song. Upon which I jumped up to the fellow: 'D—n you, why don't you sing? Did you not say you could sing at *sight?*' 'Yes, please your honour, I did say I could sing at sight, but not *first* sight.'"

To this anecdote there is a singularly exact parallel in the memoirs of Dr. Burney, the historian of music and the father of Fanny Burney. Burney says that he remembers Handel being detained at Chester on his way to Ireland in 1741. The wind was adverse, and as the composer had to stay some days in the city he determined to practise one of his choruses in the *Messiah*, and engaged an amateur, a printer named Janson, to sing for him. Janson tried and broke down. Handel was furious. "You scoundrel, did you not tell me you could sing at sight?" "Yes, Sir," said the printer, "and so I can, but not at first sight." It is evidently the same story, but to whom does it belong?

CHAPTER IV

BATH, 1769–1771

Foundation of the Royal Academy—Gainsborough an original member—The Shakespeare Festival at Stratford—Gainsborough's portrait of David Garrick in the Town Hall—The *Blue Boy*—Sir Sampson Gideon and the bank-note—A "character" of Gainsborough in 1770—On likeness in portraiture—Letters from Gainsborough to Lord Dartmouth—Fancy dress and portraits—Opinions of Gainsborough and Sir Joshua compared—Captain Wade's portrait—The reason for its altered background—Illness of Margaret Gainsborough—Dr. Moysey's dreadful verdict—A change of doctors—Accident at the New Rooms—The falling chandelier—Narrow escape of Gainsborough—Dr. Schomberg's portrait—Curious parallel—Gainsborough's "unbounded liberality."

In the spring of 1769 was held the first Exhibition of the Royal Academy, which had been brought into existence by the signing of the "Instrument" by George the Third on the 10th of December 1768. The original members of the Royal Academy were chiefly men who had belonged to the Incorporated Society of Artists and had left it owing to the incessant dissensions in that body, which came to a head when Gainsborough's friend Joshua Kirby, the Ipswich house-painter, was elected to the Presidentship. Kirby was an honest and able man of business, but as an artist not worth considering, and as the seceders from his society included all its best painters, sculptors, and architects, he was unable to make any stand against the newly founded Royal Academy, led by Joshua Reynolds and financed by the King.

Sir Joshua in his notebook for 1768 mentions writing to Gainsborough at the end of November, and this letter no doubt contained an invitation to the Bath painter to join the new institution. Gainsborough, as we know, made a favourable response, and became one of the thirty-six original members of the Royal Academy, whose

exhibition of 1769 was opened in April in Pall Mall. Gainsborough sent to it a landscape; and portraits of Lady Molyneux, of a boy who has not been identified, and of George Pitt, the eldest son of Lord Rivers. He did not, however, present a picture to the Royal Academy upon his nomination to membership, as Fulcher and some other biographers have supposed. The *Romantic Landscape with Sheep at a Fountain* by Gainsborough, now in the Diploma Gallery, was presented to the Royal Academy by the painter's daughter Margaret in 1799.

The contemporary notices of the first Academy Exhibition are very scanty, but the *St. James's Chronicle* praises Gainsborough's portrait of Lady Molyneux, and mentions it as one of the few pictures to which connoisseurs might profitably direct their attention.

Gainsborough was connected with the great festival in honour of Shakespeare held at Stratford-on-Avon in the autumn of 1769. A new Town Hall had just been built at Stratford, and to adorn it the Corporation appealed to Garrick for "a statue, bust, or portrait of Shakespeare," and if possible a portrait of himself. The letter asking for these gifts is in a collection of papers relating to the festival, formed by George Daniel, who owned the small copy of Gainsborough's Stratford portrait of Garrick which formerly hung in the dining-room of the actor's house in the Adelphi; and who bequeathed to the British Museum the famous carved casket of mulberry wood presented to Garrick by the Stratford Corporation. The letter, endorsed by Garrick, "The Steward of Stratford's letter to me which produced the Jubilee," is dated December 6th, 1768, and it is therefore clear that the picture of Shakespeare referred to in Gainsborough's letters written in the summer of that year could not have been intended for the festival. Garrick presented the Corporation with a statue of Shakespeare and a picture of him painted by Wilson. He also undertook the direction of the Jubilee festivities which, in September 1769, attracted an extra-

DAVID GARRICK

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ordinary crowd of visitors to Stratford, whose innkeepers and inhabitants generally reaped a rich harvest. Foote, who was charged nine guineas for a bed, declared that a man of whom he asked the time actually demanded a fee of two shillings for the information!

According to local tradition Garrick presented to Stratford-on-Avon the well-known portrait of himself by Gainsborough, as well as the statue and picture. The portrait shows the actor, with his arm round a bust of Shakespeare, standing in a landscape that Fulcher describes as a view in Garrick's grounds at Hampton. Walpole, probably better informed, says that it represents Prior Park, Ralph Allen's seat near Bath. When the portrait was lent by the Corporation to the Royal Academy in 1876, and to the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885, it was described on both occasions as the gift of Garrick. Fulcher believed this to be the case, but I have found proof that Garrick's portrait was a commission from the Corporation, and a copy of Gainsborough's receipt for the payment for it is among the Daniel papers.

"Received of the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon, by the hands of David Garrick, Esq., sixty-three pounds in full for a whole-length portrait of that gentleman.

£63. THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH."

The following is a copy of the bill for the elaborately carved frame of the portrait.

"The Corporation of Stratford to Mr. Wilson, Painter, at Great Queen Street, London. *17th August* 1769.

	£	s.	d.
For a Carlo Maratti frame to the picture of David Garrick, Esq.	12	12	0
Ornament to ditto, burnished gold	56	2	0
Lining for the picture, to secure it from damp, &c., and fixing it on	1	16	0
For a large case	3	12	0
Paid at the Inn for unloading ditto		2	0
	£74	4	0."

A paragraph in a London newspaper of May 1769 shows that the Corporation had already made arrangements for providing the portrait of the actor: "We hear that the new edifice in Stratford to be called Shakespeare's Hall will be decorated in the most elegant manner before the Jubilee in September next, and that the Corporation have prevailed on Mr. Garrick to sit for his picture, which they will put up at one end of the large room, and that Mr. Garrick will present the town with a picture of Shakespeare for the other end."

Some further information on this subject is given in the *Public Advertiser* of May 12, 1769. Referring to some particulars already given concerning the plans for the forthcoming celebration, the editor of the journal says: "In addition to our article on the respect paid to Shakespeare and Garrick by the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon, we are informed that there is a very large picture of Shakespeare in the attitude of exclaiming, 'O for a Muse of Fire' now at Mr. Wilson's in Great Queen Street; and another of Mr. Garrick leaning on a bust of Shakespeare, by Mr. Gainsborough; now copying at Mr. Wilson's to be put up together in the great hall at Stratford-on-Avon by order of the Corporation." "Mr. Wilson" (who should not be confused with his contemporary, Richard Wilson, R.A.) is Benjamin Wilson, the painter of the picture of Shakespeare now at Stratford, who supplied the gilt frame for Garrick's portrait. However, three days later, it was admitted that the portrait of Garrick for Stratford was not a copy by Wilson but an "original picture painted by Mr. Gainsborough," and the *Public Advertiser* further announced that it had been despatched to the birthplace of Shakespeare, where a representative of the same journal saw it some weeks before the Jubilee and complained of the unsheltered position in which, temporarily, it had been placed. "To hang up Gainsborough's picture of Roscius for a sign," he wrote, "is not doing justice to an artist who did not

mix his colours for the purpose of being exposed to winter winds."

It is curious that the Stratford correspondent of the *Gentleman's Magazine* also describes the Garrick as a copy "of Gainsborough's admirable portrait," but apart from the correction in the *Public Advertiser* the qualities of the picture proclaim it to be the work of the master. But it may be an improved replica of the portrait of 1766, and this would account for the rumour that it was a copy. Gainsborough, as we see by Underwood's correspondence, sometimes visited London in the spring, the time when the work at Wilson's house is said to have been in progress; and the description of the portrait of Garrick mentioned in the paragraph shows that it resembled the one exhibited in 1766, and condemned by the newspaper critic. It may be that this portrait did not satisfy Gainsborough, who, seeing that the composition was exactly what he wanted for the Jubilee picture, painted in London a revised version for Stratford. The sittings referred to were perhaps given by Garrick at Wilson's studio. Fulcher and Stephens have assumed that the portrait of 1766 was Garrick's property, painted for him, but there seems to be nothing to show that it was ever in the actor's possession. Gainsborough, like other artists, sometimes painted the portraits of theatrical celebrities for his own pleasure or with a view to selling them. It will be seen in a later chapter that a far more famous theatrical portrait than Garrick's (the Mrs. Siddons) was painted by Gainsborough for sale, and that he had great difficulty in disposing of a work which would now fetch many thousands of pounds at Christie's.

The Academy Exhibition of 1770 contained five portraits by Gainsborough as well as a landscape, and a "Book of Drawings." One of the portraits was another version of Garrick, described as an excellent likeness by contemporary observers; but the others have not been identified, although some writers have believed

that the full length, No. 85, was the painting of which Mary Moser wrote to Fuseli, who was then in Rome, that Gainsborough was beyond himself "in a portrait of a gentleman in a Vandyke habit." There is a theory that the picture mentioned by Mary Moser was the famous *Blue Boy*, but the journals of the time give no information that might help to solve the problem of this picture. They say very little about the exhibition, and among the Gainsboroughs mention only the portrait of Garrick.

A note in Anderdon's catalogue in the Library of the Royal Academy says that No. 83 in the exhibition of 1770, *Lady and Child*, represented Lady Gideon and her daughter, but unfortunately no authority is given for the statement. Lady Gideon was the wife of Sir Sampson Gideon, an eminent financier of the Georgian period, whose wealth and peculiarities made him the subject of many anecdotes. He was a great admirer of the Prince of Wales, and a story is told of his presiding over a large dinner party given at the Castle Inn, Brighton, to celebrate the birthday of his Royal Highness. Sir Sampson, after proposing the health of the prince, exhibited a bank note for a thousand pounds, which he swallowed with his glass of wine to show his respect for the toast. But, according to the wags of the day, he was careful to take the number of the note before thus disposing of it. Sir Sampson was afterwards raised to the peerage as Lord Eardley, and the portrait mentioned above was perhaps the one exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885 as *Lady Eardley and her Daughter.*

Philip Thicknesse, in an article written in 1770, gives an interesting glimpse of Gainsborough at this period of his Bath career, and, incidentally, some information about the painting of his draperies. Reynolds, it is well known, employed drapery painters, such as Toms and others, to execute the elaborate costumes and uniforms

of his sitters, but Gainsborough is supposed to have painted everything in his pictures with his own hands, except that in his later years he received some help from his nephew and apprentice, Gainsborough Dupont. Sir Walter Armstrong states that he knows of costumes of the artist's Bath period which were not painted by himself, but Thicknesse, writing towards the end of that period, makes it one of Gainsborough's chief virtues that nothing but his own handiwork is to be seen in his portraits. The following is Thicknesse's "character" of Gainsborough, written when the painter was living at Bath in 1770.

"*Of Mr. Gainsborough*

"Nature was his master, for he had none other! He caught his ideas with wonderful quickness and executed them with the utmost facility, with a black lead pencil he is equal to any of the greatest Masters of Antiquity; and although Landscape Painting is his natural turn; he has exceeded all the modern Portrait Painters, being the only one who paints the mind (if we may be allowed the expression) equally as strong as the countenance. We must explain ourselves; for instance suppose we should ask a friend what kind of man he was speaking of; whom we had never seen:—and he should say, go into the next room and there you will know by seeing his Portrait by Gainsborough. Reynolds and other Portrait Painters who have undoubtedly great merit, seem to us to paint the features very exactly but to be less careful about what we call the countenance. We never saw a portrait by Gainsborough (if the subject was worthy his attention) but it would enable a stranger to form the same judgment from the person as from the Life! and this is an excellence peculiar to this very great artist, add to this that Mr. Gainsborough not only paints the face; but finishes with his own hands every part of the drapery, this, however trifling a matter it may appear to some, is of great importance to the picture as it is fatigue and labour to the Artist. The

other eminent painters either cannot or will not be at that trouble.

"We have been told a noble Duke advised Mr. Gainsborough never to raise his present price. But if he does not think there is more efficacy in the advice of a Duke than from an humble admirer of his art, we could wish to hear, he raised his price, as his years increase, that he may really FEAST on the merits of his performance while he lives; he need not be told how his paintings will be valued, when he is dead. Painting is not the only art this extraordinary man possesses! Music and the sister arts dwell with him, and he knows, as well how to act, and think, like a gentleman, as he does to contemn and despise those who dare to treat him in any other light. Though we should have been glad to have seen some mark of the R—l favour shown to this gentleman yet we are spiteful enough to confess we are glad he was born on this side of the Tweed."

Thicknesse's remark about the Tweed is a reflection of the temporary unpopularity of the Scotsman in England prevalent in 1770, owing to the supposed evil influence exercised by Lord Bute on the mind of George the Third. An instance of the strong feeling against Scotsmen at the time is to be found in the reply of Allan Ramsay, painter to the King, when he was offered a knighthood the year before Thicknesse published the above article on Gainsborough. Ramsay refused the knighthood, saying "that by the country he came from he had enemies enough already, and by this title should get more." Yet Ramsay was well liked personally in London, where he moved in the same distinguished society as Reynolds; and even Johnson, no friend to the Scot at large, lamented the death of "dear Allan," which preceded by a few weeks only that of the Doctor himself.

Some interesting letters written by Gainsborough at this time are to be found in the reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The letters, which I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter, are addressed to the second Earl of Dartmouth, and were written to

excuse and explain the artist's supposed failure to obtain a likeness in the portrait of Lady Dartmouth which he had recently painted, and for which the Earl had paid him sixty guineas. In portraiture likeness was the quality upon which Gainsborough prided himself before everything ; and with some justice, for complaints upon this score appear to have been rare, although there is a letter in existence, addressed to him, in which it is stated that the portraits of Lord and Lady Douglas were so bad that the Duke of Queensberry refused to pay for them. Gainsborough was far happier in catching a likeness than was Sir Joshua, of whom Hoppner said that it surprised him that the President could venture to send home some of his portraits, so little resemblance did they bear to the originals. The first of the letters is in reply to one written by Lord Dartmouth, evidently complaining about the portrait, which is still in the possession of the family, and notifying that it is to be returned to Gainsborough for alteration. Gainsborough writes from Bath on April 8, 1771 :

"I received the honour of your Lordship's letter acquainting me that I am to expect Lady Dartmouth's picture at Bath, but it is not yet arrived. I shall be extremely willing to make any alterations your Lordship shall require when her ladyship comes to Bath for that purpose, as I cannot (without taking away the likeness) touch it, unless from the life. I would not be thought, by what I am going to observe, that I am at all unwilling to do anything your Lordship requires to it, or even to paint an entire new picture for the money I received for that, as I shall always take pleasure in doing anything for Lord Dartmouth, but I should fancy myself a great blockhead if I was capable of painting such a likeness as I did of your Lordship and not have sense enough to see why I did not give the same satisfaction in Lady Dartmouth's picture ; and I believe your Lordship will agree with me in this point, that next to being able to paint a tolerable picture is having judgment enough to see what is the matter with a bad one. I don't know if

your Lordship remembers a few impertinent remarks of mine upon the ridiculous use of fancy dresses in portraits about the time that Lord North made us laugh in describing a Family Piece his Lordship had seen somewhere, but whether your Lordship's memory will reach this trifling circumstance or not, I will venture to say that had I painted Lady Dartmouth's picture, dressed as her ladyship goes, no fault (more than in my painting in general) would have been found with it. Believe me, my Lord, though I may appear conceited in saying it so confidently, I never was far from the mark but I was able before I pulled the trigger to see the cause of my missing, and nothing is so common with me as to give up my own sight in my painting-room rather than hazard giving offence to my best customers. You see, my Lord, I can speak plainly when there is no danger of having my bones broke, and if your Lordship encourages my giving still a free opinion upon the matter I will do it in another line."

The "other line," in which Gainsborough carries further his argument about costume and portraiture, was despatched to Lord Dartmouth five days later. Gainsborough writes on April 13th:

"I can see plainly your Lordship's good nature in not taking amiss what I wrote in my last, though it is not so clear to me but your Lordship has some suspicion that I meant it to spare myself the trouble of painting another picture of Lady Dartmouth, which time and opportunity may convince your Lordship was not the intention, and here I give it under my hand that I will most willingly begin upon a new canvas. But I only for the present beg your Lordship will give me leave to try an experiment upon that picture to prove the amazing effect of dress. I meant to treat it as a cast-off picture and dress it (contrary, I know, to Lady Dartmouth's taste) in the modern way; the worst consequence that can attend it will be her ladyship's being angry with me for a time. I am vastly out in my notion if the face does not immediately look like; but I must know if Lady Dartmouth powders or not in common. I only beg to know that and to have the picture sent down to me. I promise this, my Lord, that if I boggle a month by way

of experiment to please myself, it shall not in the least abate my desire of attempting another to please your Lordship when I can be in London for that purpose, or Lady Dartmouth comes to Bath."

Gainsborough's third and last letter is dated April 18th:

"Nothing," he says, "can be more absurd than the foolish custom of painters dressing people like scaramouches and expecting the likeness to appear. Had a picture voice, action, &c., to make itself known as actors have upon the stage no disguise would be sufficient to conceal a person; but only a face, confined to one view and not a muscle to move to say, 'Here I am,' falls very hard upon the poor painter, who perhaps is not within a mile of the truth in painting the face only. Your Lordship, I am sure, will be sensible of the dress thus far, but I defy any but a painter of some sagacity (and such you see I am, my Lord) to be well aware of the different effects which one part of a picture has upon another, and how the eye may be cheated as to the appearance of size, &c., by an artful management of the accompaniments. A tune may be so confused by a false bass that if it is ever so plain, simple, and full of meaning it shall become a jumble of nonsense, and just so shall a handsome face be overset by a fictitious bundle of trumpery of the foolish painter's own inventing. For my part (however your Lordship may suspect my genius for lying) I have that regard for truth that I hold the finest invention as a mere slave in comparison, and believe I shall remain an ignorant fellow to the end of my days, because I never could have patience to read poetical impossibilities, the very food of a painter, especially if he intends to be knighted in this land of roast beef, so well do serious people love froth. But, where am I, my Lord, this my free opinion in another line with a witness, forgive me, my Lord, I am but a wild goose at best, all I mean is this, Lady Dartmouth's picture will look more like and not so large when dressed properly, and if it does not I will begin another."

These letters show that Gainsborough ascribed Lord Dartmouth's disapproval of the portrait to the fact that Lady Dartmouth had chosen to be painted in fancy

CAPTAIN WADE

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we have. His five whole-lengths in the exhibition are very good. That of the lady in the fancied dress is particularly graceful. This lady, who has something of a French look, has a remarkably piercing eye and a sensible and polite countenance. The two large landscapes (No. 79 and No. 80) by this painter are very good. They are executed with a masterly hand and with an excellent *gout* of colouring." The "lady in the fancied dress" (this is Gainsborough's own expression) was Lady Ligonier, who in the early spring of the year had also given sittings to Sir Joshua. Gainsborough's remaining portraits at the Academy of 1771 were those of Lord Ligonier, Lady Sussex and her child, Mr. Nuthall, and Captain Wade, then Master of the Ceremonies at Bath.

After the close of the exhibition Captain Wade's portrait was brought back to Bath and hung in the New Assembly Rooms, which had recently been built not far from Gainsborough's house in The Circus. The portrait was placed in the card-room, where it was criticised by the writer of some verses that amused the idlers of Bath in the following winter, and by a lucky chance make clear for us the meaning of the re-paintings that show themselves on the canvas to-day. Gainsborough's portrait, which is a full length, shows the Captain wearing a red coat and standing hat in hand at the bottom of a flight of steps leading to a house, a part of which covers a considerable portion of the background. The remainder of the background is composed of sky and landscape, and when the portrait was exhibited in 1913 by Messrs. Agnew it was evident that the house and steps were after-thoughts. They had been painted to conceal part of the sky and landscape, the details of which can now be seen plainly because the paint of the super-imposed house and steps has become semi-transparent with age.

The verses referred to are supposed to be written to a friend in the country by an invalid staying at Bath,

who is describing a walk through the new Assembly Rooms:

> "All at once I was struck with the portrait of Wade,
> Which, tho' like him in features, is much too tall made,
> And looks, like its Master—ashamed of his trade.
> For it's drawn as if walking *alone* in the fields
> In a jauntee undress which the present mode yields,
> *Uncovered*—as though he intended to bow
> To an ox or an ass—to a heifer or cow;
> Thus to keep his hand in that he may not forget,
> When he hands out the ladies—to bow and *retreat.*"

So far the writer has described the portrait as it appears to have been in its first state, with a background entirely pastoral and therefore not in keeping with the figure of the Master of the Ceremonies. Gainsborough seems to have realised this and to have added the steps and house, for the writer of the verses goes on to say:

> "The piece I allude to was since taken down—
> Did it then cause a *smile* it now merits a *frown;*
> It is altered indeed—but made worse by the touch:—
> If the MASTER is meant why not paint him as such?
> Why draw him as if hurrying out of the room
> Down a steep flight of steps? much like those by his home,
> Or why must the meadows retain a sly peep?—
> If the fields *must* be there why not give us some sheep?"

Despite adverse criticism Captain Wade's portrait remained on the walls of the New Assembly Rooms for a hundred and thirty years, until its authorship was almost forgotten. But the tradition that it was from the hand of Gainsborough was never quite lost, and in 1902 the proprietors of the Rooms put the matter to the test by submitting the portrait to the examination of Sir Walter Armstrong and Mr. Morland Agnew, to whom its authenticity was at once evident. It was put up to auction in the following year at Christie's, where the hammer fell at 2100 guineas.

Another glimpse of Gainsborough at Bath at this time is given in a long letter to Garrick from John Palmer

of the Bath theatre. Garrick had asked him to convey a message to Gainsborough, and this is his reply :

"BATH, *Sunday night*, 1771.

"DEAR SIR,—Mr. Gainsborough has been so very indifferent, from his attention to and confinement with his daughter in her illness, and I have been so much engaged with one matter or other, that I had no opportunity of delivering your message to him until the other night at the new rooms.

"He says you have sent him wine enough to bribe the whole Corporation with. I had called at his house once or twice after his return, and he was too ill to see anyone. Miss Gainsborough is now as well as ever she was. He complains very much of Moysey's behaviour ; who paid no attention to her, declaring that it was a family complaint and he did not suppose she would ever recover her senses again ; so that Gainsborough was obliged to call in Schomberg and Charlton, who called it by its right name, a delirious fever, and soon cured her. Gainsborough sent home after this the pictures of Moysey and his family, which he had painted gratis for him, and the old doctor paid for the frames.

"Standing under one of the chandeliers with Gainsborough, admiring the figures which the ingenious Committee had drawn by Garvey the landscape painter, we narrowly escaped having our crowns cracked by a branch falling out of one of the chandeliers ; it was taken little notice of by the company, but the Committee met upon the next morning, and that the public might not be alarmed by it, and to make them easy, put the enclosed publication in the papers ; which had so good an effect that the next night they had not two hundred people in the room ! "

There is more of this letter, but it is unnecessary to quote the closing paragraph, as it does not concern Gainsborough. The " publication in the paper " to which Palmer refers was a paragraph in the *Bath Chronicle* of October 24, 1771, which however well intended was not calculated to reassure the timid. It is not surprising that the rooms were comparatively empty the night after the appearance of the managers' advertisement.

"New Assembly Rooms. As an alarming and unforeseen accident happened at the last ball, by one of the branches of the chandeliers breaking; to prevent the like in future, and that the company may be perfectly secure and easy, the managers have thought proper to *remove* all the suspected chandeliers and put others in their places, from which no accident can be apprehended. October 23, 1771."

Palmer's letter is of singular interest. It shows Gainsborough in the light of an affectionate father forgetting everything in his anxiety for his elder daughter, to whom he was always tenderly attached, although there was friction between the two a few years later, when he wrote of Margaret as a good and sensible girl, "but Insolent and Proud in her behaviour to me at times." In Dr. Moysey's dreadful verdict there is a foreshadowing of the mental aberration that in later life affected both of Gainsborough's daughters, and the suggestion that Margaret's complaint was hereditary recalls the opinion of Thicknesse and Angelo that the painter himself was not far from the line that divides genius from insanity. Dr. Moysey, who should have had good reason to sympathise with Gainsborough at this crisis, as he had lost his own daughter in the preceding year, is the physician mentioned by the artist as "Dr. Moisy" in his letter to Lord Royston. He was one of the prominent medical men of this time in Bath, and a person of importance in that city. Dr. Moysey's son Abel was chosen in 1774 to represent Bath in Parliament, and Gainsborough painted a full-length portrait of him, and a smaller study that is now in the National Gallery. Abel Moysey was a friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and was one of the mourners who attended the President's funeral. Gainsborough, as we have seen, painted Dr. Moysey and his family gratuitously; and it may be that the full-length of Dr. Schomberg in the National Gallery was presented to him in grateful recognition of his share in bringing about the recovery of Margaret.

Dr. Ralph Schomberg is said to have been related to the Duke of Schomberg, William the Third's general, the founder of the family in whose London house in Pall Mall Gainsborough afterwards resided. He was the "Doctor Ralpho" of Garrick, the physician and the affectionate friend of the actor, who liked everything about him but his plays. For Schomberg was ambitious to shine as a dramatic author, and submitted many pieces to Garrick, by whom they were repeatedly refused. One of his plays, a small afterpiece, was performed at the Haymarket about 1781. His portrait by Gainsborough, in its connection with the National Gallery, has a curious history. It was presented to the Gallery by a donor who unfortunately owned only part of the rights in the picture. The portrait was exhibited for some time, and was then claimed by the joint-owners and returned to them by the Trustees. Years afterwards it was offered to the National Gallery by a member of the Schomberg family, and purchased from him for a thousand pounds. It is remarkable that the only other incident of this kind in the history of the National Gallery is connected with a work by Sir Joshua Reynolds, between whom and Gainsborough rivalry in everything seems to have been predestined. The story of the presentation, temporary loss, and final recovery of the portrait of Dr. Schomberg, is in many respects exactly parallel to that of Sir Joshua's *Lady Cockburn and her Children.*

The other physician, Dr. Charlton, who was called in to consult about Margaret Gainsborough, was a wealthy man, with a seat in Gloucestershire in addition to a house in Alfred Buildings, Bath; and he owned a large collection of pictures—Italian, French, Flemish and English. His pictures by Gainsborough included "the celebrated one of the Woodman going out before sunrise, esteemed one of the best landscapes ever painted by that ingenious artist"; and "A Landscape and Cattle, painted with great spirit in distemper." The picture of the *Woodman*

is said by Fulcher to have been a gift from Gainsborough to the physician, but on what occasion is not stated. This work, it should be observed, was not the famous *Woodman*, which belonged to a much later period of Gainsborough's career. Dr. Charlton's portrait, painted by Gainsborough some years before his daughter's illness, has already been mentioned. It was exhibited at Spring Gardens in 1766.

A letter written this year is worth quoting as showing the high estimation in which Gainsborough was held by such a circumspect person as James Clutterbuck of Bath, Garrick's friend and business adviser. Writing to Garrick on the 4th of May, 1771, he says :

" It is fit you should know that the first of the month I brought in my chariot from Gainsborough's house in The Circus, a copy of his exquisite portrait of you ; and if your idea of gratitude is as high as mine you will never begrudge the friendship you have bestowed upon the Painter, who, because he owes you so much thinks it is not in his power to pay you enough ; whereby he proves it to demonstration that it is impossible for you to lay out your benevolence to such advantage as in serving him. So long as that mother of all the virtues will be held in estimation, and that will be as long as one honest heart is left among us, Gainsborough will possess as much honesty and esteem as a man as he is entitled to as an artist. Thank him and you—you and him—for the most valuable present it is worth my while (circumstanced as I am) to accept of, and which affords me more pleasure than the being next taker to Lord Clive's possessions could possibly do. The unbounded liberality Gainsborough possesses hath inclined him—contrary to my wishes and expostulations—to add a frame (price 55s.) to my picture."

There is another reference to Gainsborough's gift to Clutterbuck in an undated letter to Garrick, endorsed by him on the reverse, " Gainsborough, present of my head to Mrs. Garrick." Garrick appears to have wished to pay for the replica intended for Clutterbuck, and for the

original picture, painted by Gainsborough for Mrs. Garrick. Gainsborough writes:

"I never will consent that anybody makes a present of your face to Clutterbuck but myself, because I always intended a copy (*by my own hand*) for him, that he may one day tell me what to do with my money, the only thing he understands, except jeering of folks. I shall look upon it that you break in upon my line of happiness if you mention it; and as to the original, it was to be my present to Mrs. Garrick, and so it shall be."

CHAPTER V

BATH, 1772–1774

Henderson the actor—"Mr. T. of Bath"—Gainsborough's colour criticised—The purple-faced peer—Bourgeois on Gainsborough's advice on colour—A painter of painted women—Gainsborough and the Bath newspapers—Bath artists' colourmen—Poem on Gainsborough's Bath pictures—Another portrait of Garrick—The first quarrel with the Academy—Its reason unknown—A suggested explanation—Gainsborough paints Dr. Dodd—The doctor sentenced to death—A plot for his escape from prison—The wax head—A portrait of Philip Thicknesse—The ex-governor's story of a quarrel with Gainsborough—He claims to have driven Gainsborough from Bath—The probable reason of the artist's departure for London—Wright of Derby—Thicknesse in difficulties—Gainsborough's hospitality—Lord Radnor's patronage.

In 1772 a young actor made his first appearance on the boards of the Bath Theatre under the name of Courtenay, and, in the opinion of Gainsborough and other local patrons of the drama, showed exceptional promise in the part of Hamlet. Mr. Courtenay was so much encouraged by his reception in Bath that he dropped his *alias*, and played in future under his own name of John Henderson, which in the course of a few years became almost as well known as that of Garrick himself. "I have resumed my own name," wrote Henderson in December 1772, "in a prologue written for me by a gentleman of great talents, and a painter, though not a painter by profession. His genius is like the Dryads and Hamadryads, embosomed in woods and fields. In plain English, he is perhaps the greatest landscape painter we have." This description appears at first sight to fit Gainsborough, but the words "though not a painter by profession," show that Henderson had some one else in his mind. The writer of his

prologue was a neighbour of Gainsborough's, living close by him in The Circus, a Mr. John Taylor, who as "Mr. T. of Bath," figures in *Humphry Clinker*, where Smollett (who does not mention Gainsborough) praises in the highest terms his landscapes "painted for amusement." The gifted Taylor, whose pictures, unfortunately, have passed into oblivion, was also eulogised by Garrick, who upon hearing the patronising comment of a local connoisseur that Taylor's views of Bath were finely enough painted "for a gentleman," wrote some verses of protest on the text—

> "Is genius, rarest gift of Heaven,
> To the *hired* artist only given?"

But the be-praised amateur and his neglected professional neighbour in The Circus had one thing in common. They were both admirers of Henderson, and with the actor Gainsborough soon formed a close friendship. How intimate it became may be judged by the letters I have already mentioned, in connection with Garrick, as written by Gainsborough to Henderson. Ireland, who prints the letters in his memoir of the actor, mentions the writer as "a gentleman who honoured Henderson with his friendship and protection the first season he played at Bath." Gainsborough's letters to his young friend are full of advice, and of warnings against gluttony, which seems to have been one of Henderson's besetting sins, and against the temptations and supposed immoralities of London. In speaking of London, where his youth was spent, Gainsborough throws some light upon one of his own weaknesses, and upon the reason why his wife, three or four years after the date of his letter to Henderson, was still afraid to trust him alone in the great town, which, he tells the actor, "was my first school, and deeply read in petticoats I am."

In another letter Gainsborough refers again to Henderson's gluttony, and, in urging him to follow Garrick,

gives expression to his views upon the value of originality in the actor's art.

"In all but eating," he writes, "stick to Garrick; in *that* let him stick to you, for I'll be curst if you are not his master! Never mind the fools who talk of imitation and copying; all is imitation, and if you quit that natural likeness to Garrick which your mother bestowed upon you, you'll be flung. Ask Garrick else. Why, Sir, what makes the difference, between man and man, is real performance, and not genius or conception. There are a thousand Garricks, a thousand Giardinis, and Fischers and Abels. Why only one Garrick with Garrick's eyes, voice, &c.? One Giardini with Giardini's fingers, &c.? But one Fischer with Fischer's dexterity, quickness, &c.? Or more than one Abel with Abel's feeling upon the instrument? All the rest of the world are mere *hearers* and *see'rs*."

It was through John Ireland, no doubt, that Gainsborough and Henderson became friends. Ireland, who was Henderson's early protector and supporter, and accompanied him to Bath on the occasion of his first appearance on the stage, was also intimate with Gainsborough, who was his frequent guest. Gainsborough gave Ireland a portrait of Henderson, and promised another to the actor himself. Writing to the manager of the theatre at Bath in 1773, Henderson says: "Gainsborough is a varlet. He promised me a miniature from the picture of mine, but wits and genius, if they get nothing else from the Court, learn their d——d tricks of promising and forgetting." Henderson's allusion to the Court in this letter is mysterious, for there is no reason to believe that Gainsborough had any commissions from the King or Queen until some time after he had settled in London.

During the last two or three years of Gainsborough's residence at Bath, his colouring was the subject of several uncomplimentary criticisms in the public journals. In 1772 he sent four portraits to the Royal Academy; and ten landscapes, two of which were water-colours var-

nished to give them the appearance of paintings in oil. This was at one time a favourite practice of Gainsborough's, and some of his varnished drawings are still in existence. The *Middlesex Journal*, commenting upon his work at the Academy, says: "No one need be informed of Mr. Gainsborough's excellence in portrait painting, and it may safely be assumed that his performances of this year will lose him none of that fame which he has so justly acquired by his former productions. He seems, however, to have one fault, a fault upon the side of excess—his colours are too glowing. It would be well for him if he would borrow a little of the modest colouring of Sir Joshua Reynolds." This unfavourable comparison with Reynolds must have been intensely annoying to the Bath painter, for the long rivalry between the two acknowledged leaders of the growing British School of portraiture had already commenced, and until the death of Gainsborough the newspapers never ceased to contrast his achievements with those of Sir Joshua, and to add new fuel to the burning fire of jealousy on both sides.

Another critic, writing in the *Westminster Magazine* above the initials "J. H.," also falls foul of Gainsborough's colour.

"Who, for instance," says this writer, "views a painting of Mr. Gainsborough but must acknowledge that he throws a dash of purple into every colour from his pencil? which must proceed either from his not cleaning it sufficiently, or from a reflection of the purple colour from his eye. I remember having seen a portrait by him of a certain nobleman, remarkable for the sobriety of his life, and who was never known to have been drunk; but his Lordship having naturally a very florid complexion, the addition of Mr. Gainsborough's purple to the colour of his nose and his cheeks will probably make him pass with posterity as the damn'dest drunken dog that ever lived. Mr. Gainsborough will recollect the portrait I mean when I tell him that the Lady he has painted for its companion

is drawn working a net, and that particular pains have been taken in polishing the mahogany table at which she sits."

I cannot identify the portraits of the nobleman and the lady mentioned by " J. H." or those shown by Gainsborough at the Academy of 1772, and am therefore unable to give any information as to their alleged over-colouring. However, it is possible that Gainsborough at this time was making experiments that proved unsuccessful, for that abuse of colour was exercising his mind in this very year we know from a letter to Garrick in which he makes some interesting remarks upon what he believed to be a general want of restraint in the arts at that time. He writes thus to his friend :

" When the streets are paved with brilliants and the skies made of rainbows I suppose you'll be contented and satisfied with red, blue and yellow. It appears to me that fashion, let it consist of false or true taste, will have its run like a runaway horse ; for when eyes and ears are thoroughly debauched by glare and noise the returning to modest truth will seem very gloomy for a time, and I know you are cursedly puzzled how to make this retreat without putting out your lights and losing the advantage of all our new discoveries of transparent painting, &c.— how to satisfy your tawdry friends while you steal back into the mild evening gleam and quiet middle term. I'll tell you, my sprightly genius, how this is to be done. Maintain all your lights, but spare the poor abused colours till the eye rests and recovers. Keep up your music by supplying the place of *noise* by more sound, more harmony and more tune, and split that cursed fife and drum. What ever so great a genius as Mr. Garrick may say or do to support our false taste, he must feel the truth of what I am now saying, that neither our plays, paintings or music are any longer real works of invention, but the abuse of Nature's lights and what has been already invented in former times."

This advice to Garrick is given with so much feeling that Gainsborough's letter reads as if he himself had

lately indulged in a debauch of colour and false brilliancy and had now returned to "the mild evening gleam and quiet middle term," the importance of which he impressed later upon an artist (it must be admitted a very bad one), who was in some degree his pupil. Sir Francis Bourgeois, R.A., in a letter which I think has not been quoted before, says:

"The late Mr. Gainsborough, with whom I had the pleasure of being upon the most intimate terms, favoured me so far as to come and see my pictures very often, and he was kind enough to tell me ingenuously what he thought would contribute to my improvement. Being particularly desirous of directing my attention to colour, he used to tell me that a chaste colouring was as necessary to a picture as modesty to an artist."

Gainsborough has been accused by other contemporary writers, and especially by Anthony Pasquin, of exaggerating the natural hues of his sitters' complexions; but it must not be forgotten that throughout his career, and particularly in his Bath period, he had to paint the portraits of painted women. The practice of making-up was universal, and was carried to an excess that to us seems preposterous. It was common alike to ladies of high degree and those of the demi-monde, and the Countess of Coventry—one of the beautiful sisters Gunning—and Sir Joshua's famous model Kitty Fisher are both supposed to have died through maladies brought on by the abuse of cosmetics. Condemnatory notes on this unbecoming and unwholesome fashion were constantly written by the journalists of the time, and one humourist among them went so far as to announce with apparent gravity that an exhibition was shortly to be held by the members of "The Society of Cosmetic Artists in Painting, Enamelling and Varnish." Among an imaginary list of portraits likely to be seen at the exhibition, he mentions one of "A Maid of Honour, very fine, but a little damaged by time—after Titian." Some lines pub-

lished in Bath in 1773 show the extent to which, according to an anonymous versifier, the practice prevailed in the city where Gainsborough was then residing.

> "The Ladies at Bath make no more of their faces
> Than the Painter who daubs o'er his wainscot and bases,
> And after three coats they have laid on—or more,
> For beauties they'll pass though no beauties before."

The pamphlet is one of many written to criticise and make game of the habits and weaknesses of the giddy crowd that in the season thronged the public resorts of what was then the most fashionable watering-place in England. From publications such as these, and from Anstey's well-known *New Bath Guide*, we can obtain some idea of the life in which Gainsborough shared; but a better picture of his surroundings may be formed by consulting the contemporary *Bath Journal* and *Bath Chronicle*, although at Bath, as at Ipswich, the best information in the local papers is to be found in the advertisement pages.

Gainsborough, I think, must have been on bad terms with the proprietors or editors of these two Bath papers, which were as prominent in the city then as they are to-day. The painter was one of the attractions of Bath. All the great and fashionable people who went there visited his studio, and many of the most important of them sat to him. Yet he is rarely mentioned in the Bath papers except when he pays for an advertisement, and he obtains at no time the effusive admiration that is bestowed upon immeasurably inferior and now long forgotten men. Gainsborough was probably ill-pleased when his death was announced in the *Bath Journal*, and no doubt called upon the editor and expressed his opinion in plain terms in the quaint and interesting old rooms that are still part of the offices of the paper, but a misunderstanding of this kind does not account sufficiently for his neglect by the local press. One of the rare appearances of his name in print occurs in 1769, in some

verses written by a contributor to the *Bath Chronicle*, who was impressed, as everyone seems to have been always, by the strong resemblance of Gainsborough's portraits to his sitters. The lines are upon a newly-painted portrait of "Mrs. S—t—d," and commence—

> "The Picture to the Original so Like
> You all beholders with amazement strike."

The couplet gives an adequate idea of the literary quality of the verses, which, however, are far outshone by the efforts of another writer who three or four months afterwards laments the death of "the late ingenious Mr. Robins, landscape painter of Bath." Mr. Robins, whose pictures are forgotten as completely as those of Mr. Taylor, is lamented in no fewer than twenty-four lines, of which the following are fairly representative:

> "Where now, O Nature, is thy favourite child?
> Beneath whose touch the rising landscape smiled,
> Whose strokes could call such wondrous scenes to view
> As none but Robins and thyself ere knew."

It is disappointing to read in a subsequent advertisement that the son of the favourite child of Nature is carrying on the landscape-painting business of his father, and—appealing to the Nobility and Gentry—"humbly begs a continuance of their favours, which he will gratefully acknowledge." The Bath newspapers show that Gainsborough had opportunities of seeing pictures and other works by and after the Old Masters, besides those in the private collections to which it is known that he had access. "Mr. Champione, Italian," advertises in 1765 an exhibition of "a large and curious collection of statues modelled from the antiques of Italy and France, and a number of new and old prints after the best masters." Champione, who travelled about England with his collection, appears again in the advertisement columns in other years; and in November 1768, Mr. Samuel Dixon announced his intention of opening his picture room at

the Cross, Bath, where he hoped to show his patrons several Old Masters that had not been exhibited before. Dixon died two months later, and all his pictures were offered for immediate sale, with the lowest price that could be accepted marked on each work.

He was succeeded in the following year by Mr. William Jones, described always in his advertisements as "Fruit Painter." Jones, who was an exhibitor at the Royal Academy and the Society of Artists, was more ambitious than Dixon, the dealer he followed. His collection included examples, real or supposed, of Rubens, Murillo, Holbein, and Poussin; but his opinions on attributions were not in agreement with those of a critic who visited the gallery, and afterwards spoke disrespectfully of the masterpieces gathered together by Mr. Jones. The proprietor, undaunted, replied in a letter in which he says that he has consulted several artists who agree with him as to the authenticity of his pictures. Unfortunately he mentions no names, and we cannot tell who were his supporters, but no doubt Gainsborough, as the most prominent local artist, was consulted in the matter. It may be that from the Jones collection came some of Gainsborough's Old Masters—Michael Angelos and others—that his widow found it so difficult to dispose of even at the lowest prices. The challenge to Jones appears to have done his gallery no harm, as in 1770 he is advertising again, and by this time his collection has received important additions in the shape of pictures by Rembrandt and Vandyke, and what is said to have been a fine landscape by Claude. Mr. Christie, the auctioneer of whom Gainsborough was afterwards to be the near neighbour in London, is an occasional advertiser in the Bath papers at this period.

Little is known of the sources whence Gainsborough obtained the materials of his profession, but at Bath he was well off for artists' colourmen, whose advertisements are frequent in the local journals, although rarely to be

seen at this time in London papers. Charles Davis, for example, offers in 1763, at the sign of the Golden Boy in Horse Street, water-colours in shells, palettes and palette knives, oils and colours, best London brushes, and " prim'd cloths," or canvases as we call them now. Francis Woolley, at the appropriate sign of the St. Luke's Head, and Joseph Granger in the Market Place, have colours in the bladders that were universally used by artists until they were superseded about seventy years ago by the collapsible tubes now in use ; and the stationer Basnett can provide drawing paper and chalks, as well as camel-hair brushes and every requisite for the water-colour painter. All this shows that the arts were practised extensively in Bath, where, in addition to the professionals, there were swarms of amateurs. And for the amateurs there was always in the season an ample supply of teachers, including such impudent travelling quacks as a Mrs. Bradshaw, who, in April 1773, offers to give instruction in oil painting, although she is only staying at Bath for a few days. No longer time than this was needed by Mrs. Bradshaw, who claimed that, by her process, " any person may be enabled in a few lessons to equal the greatest Masters, although wholly unacquainted with the arts of painting or drawing."

Although the writers in Bath newspapers took little notice of Gainsborough's pictures, their charm was appreciated to the full by a visitor to the city in 1773, who, after viewing the works in the studio of the painter, predicts his future greatness in a poem published in the *Gentleman's Magazine.*

VERSES ON SEEING MR. GAINSBOROUGH'S PICTURES AT BATH

While connoisseurs with artificial eyes,
Mechanically pose, and fix the prize;
While dead to each fine feeling of the heart,
And every principle of taste and art,

They centre merit in an ancient name
And parcel out by *centuries* the fame,
Be mine the pleasure, tho' in humble lays,
True *modern* merit to discern and praise.
Yes, Gainsborough ! yes : thy magic pieces charm,
And want but age dull connoisseurs to warm.
Thy vivid colours, elegant design,
Rich strokes of fancy, chaste and flowing line,
All Nature's beauties in thy tints that glow
At once thy taste and master-judgment show ;
Even beauty's self comes from thy hand improv'd,
And doubly we are charmed with what we loved.
The living landscape on thy canvas wears
New grace, and gay enchantment all appears.
Oh ! to thy charming Cottage let me rove,
That scene of beauty and domestic love ;
There could I gaze for ever, and admire
Thy genius, judgement, elegance and fire :
And, were that Cottage mine, no lordly Peer
For mercenary gold should enter there ;
In high content the matchless prize I'd hold
And rate thy genius far above all gold.

A note explains that the " charming Cottage " refers to a most elegant painting of Mr. Gainsborough's which has been purchased by a noble Lord. It is impossible to guess from the vague indications in the poem which of Gainsborough's several cottage pictures is referred to, but it is not likely to have been the famous *Cottage Door* at Grosvenor House, as that was not bought by Earl Grosvenor until 1827.

The portrait of Garrick, already referred to as having been painted for the actor's wife, was sent to her in 1772. It was painted at a much earlier date, but Gainsborough liked it so much that he was loth to part with it, as he shows in the following letter, written to Garrick to warn him of the approaching arrival of the canvas.

" BATH, *June 22nd*, 1772.

" DEAR SIR,—I ask pardon for having kept your picture so long from Mrs. Garrick. It has indeed been of great service in keeping me going ; but my chief reason

for detaining it so long was the hopes of getting one copy *like*, to hang in my own parlour, not as a show picture but for my own enjoyment, to look when I please at a great man who has thought me worthy of some little notice; but not one copy can I make which does not as much resemble Mr. Garrick's brother as himself—so I have bestowed a drop of excellent varnish to keep you out, instead of a falling tear at parting, and have only to beg of dear Mrs. Garrick to hang it in the best light she can find out, and to continue puffing for me in the manner Mr. Keate informs me she does.

"That you may long continue to delight and surprise the world with your original face, whilst I hobble after with my copy, is the sincere wish of, dear Sir,—Your most unaccountable and obedient servant,

"THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH.

"*P.S.*—The picture is to go to London by Wiltshire's flying waggon on Wednesday next; and I believe will arrive by Saturday morning."

Gainsborough, always careful to an uncommon degree about the placing of his pictures, takes care to hint to Mrs. Garrick that she should hang her husband's portrait in a good light, and he says more upon the same subject in a postscript to another letter written in the same year. "A word to the wise. If you let your portrait hang up so high only to consult your room, it can never look without a hardness of countenance and the painting flat; it was calculated for breast high and will never have its effect or likeness otherwise."

In 1773 mention is made for the first time of a quarrel between Gainsborough and the Royal Academy. Walpole has written on the front page of his Academy catalogue for 1773, "Gainsborough and Dance having disagreed with Sir Joshua Reynolds, did not send any pictures to this exhibition"; and that is all the direct information we possess about the unfortunate misunderstanding which deprived the Royal Academy exhibitions of Gainsborough's work until 1777, when he reappeared

triumphant with a group of canvases that included a portrait which some regard as his finest achievement. I have been unable to discover any reference to the quarrel in the newspapers of 1773, but from Walpole's statement it appears to have been connected with something antecedent to the sending-in day for the Academy Exhibition of that year. Now Gainsborough, as we know, took no part at this time in the business of the Academy, or showed the slightest interest in its affairs unless they concerned the hanging of his own pictures. It is probable, therefore, that the disagreement with Reynolds was connected with the arrangement of the preceding Exhibition of 1772, and this is the more likely because Nathaniel Dance, who was concerned with Gainsborough in the quarrel, was on the Council that year.

If, then, the disagreement was in 1772, a statement that appeared in a newspaper a few days after the opening of the Academy Exhibition in that year no doubt has some bearing on the matter.

"We hear," says the *Public Advertiser* of May 4th, 1772, "that the Gentlemen upon the Committee for managing the Royal Academy have been guilty of a scandalous meanness to a capital artist by secreting a whole length picture of an English Countess for fear their Majesties should see it; and this only upon a full conviction that it was the best finished picture sent this year to the exhibition. The same artist has been affronted in this manner several times before, from which they may depend upon his implacable resentment, and will hear from him in a manner that will very much displease them."

The fiery tone of the concluding sentence of this paragraph suggests that it was inspired by the impetuous Gainsborough, who addressed the Academicians in much the same manner in the later disputes of 1783 and 1784. Probably the "English Countess" was Horace Walpole's niece, the widowed Countess Waldegrave, mother of the

three beautiful daughters who figure in Sir Joshua's famous group. Her connection with the Duke of Gloucester, the brother of the King, whose wife she had long been in secret, had caused serious trouble at Court, and the Royal Marriage Bill, intended to prevent further unions of this kind, had been passed in the teeth of the bitterest opposition in the spring of 1772, immediately before the opening of the Royal Academy.

Taking all these things together, it seems not unlikely that Gainsborough painted a portrait of the Countess Waldegrave which he thought exceptionally good and sent it to the Academy of 1772; and that the diplomatic Sir Joshua, knowing the King's angry feeling towards the Countess, and anxious to avoid offending the Academy's founder and patron, managed, with the support of the majority of the Council, to keep the portrait out of the exhibition. Gainsborough may have thought that the suppression of his work was due not so much to political exigencies as to the jealousy of his fellow portrait-painters; and hence the bitterness of the paragraph in the *Public Advertiser*, and his abstention during the following four years. All this, of course, is conjectural, but it seems a possible explanation of the quarrel, and the idea that it was connected with the Countess Waldegrave is supported by the fact that Walpole has pasted on to the last page of his Academy catalogue for 1772 a cutting from a newspaper containing the paragraph quoted above. Gainsborough painted two or three portraits of Walpole's niece, one of which was the exquisite half-length that was long in the possession of the Duke of Cambridge, and was sold at Christie's after his death for £12,705. As I shall show later, it was the treatment by the Academy of a portrait of the Countess's daughter, Lady Horatia Waldegrave, that embittered Gainsborough in 1783, and led to the final rupture of the following year.

One of Gainsborough's sitters in 1773 was the

notorious Dr. Dodd, tutor of the fifth Lord Chesterfield (nephew of the writer of the famous *Letters*), and the author of many books on religious subjects. Dodd, who was one of the most popular pulpit orators of the period, had a chapel at Bath for some time, and both he and his wife were well known to the Gainsboroughs. The painting of the portrait was soon followed by a present made to Mrs. Gainsborough by Mrs. Dodd, who sent her from London "an elegant silk dress." It was acknowledged by Gainsborough in a quaint letter, addressed to the Doctor, at Queen Street, Westminster. Writing on November 24, 1773, Gainsborough says that he wishes he could express his gratitude with his pencil instead of with his pen, and adds :

"Such politeness cannot be soon or easily forgotten ; and if I was not afraid of taking from the partiality Mrs. Dodd has for your picture as it is now, and I thought it possible to make it ten times handsomer, I would give it a few touches in the warmth of my gratitude, though the ladies say it is very handsome as it is ; for I peep and listen through the keyhole in the door of the painting-room on purpose to see how you touch them out of the pulpit as well as in it. Lord, says one, what a lively eye that gentleman has ! "

Little more than three years after the painting of this portrait Dodd was convicted of forging Lord Chesterfield's signature and sentenced to death. Unparalleled efforts were made to obtain a reprieve, and the whole country was roused by the Doctor's supporters. Among Gainsborough's friends, many of whom had been well acquainted with the criminal, the excitement was intense, and the painter's musical cronies, Bach and Abel, were always disputing about the prevailing topic—Bach for hanging, Abel for reprieve. The Reverend Henry Bate, to whom, as I have said, much of the new information about Gainsborough in this book is due, worked hard on Dodd's behalf. He, in company with Sheridan's

father, went about Soho with ink-bottles in their button-holes, carrying a long roll of parchment and pens with which signatures in favour of a reprieve might be inscribed. They persisted, in spite of the derision of Horne Tooke, who declared that the populace believed the couple to be tax-collectors, but their petition and unnumbered others were sent to the King in vain, and Dodd suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

In spite of Dodd's deplorable character, women were foremost in their entreaties for royal clemency, and, if Philip Thicknesse is to be believed, a woman's ingenuity might have enabled the forger to escape if he had possessed more energy and courage. The woman was an artist and an acquaintance of Gainsborough's; Mrs. Phoebe Wright, a popular American modeller of portraits in wax, whose daughter afterwards married John Hoppner, R.A. Mrs. Wright made a life-size wax model of Dodd's head, and conveyed it beneath her skirts to the prison where he lay under sentence of death. Dodd spent most of his time in bed, and Mrs. Wright's idea was that a dummy figure with a wax head on the pillow might deceive the keeper sufficiently to permit the prisoner to slip away unobserved. He was not in irons, and as his room was frequently full of visitors, Thicknesse says that the scheme might have been practicable if Dodd's heart had not failed him, as it did, at the last moment.

In 1774 Gainsborough decided to leave Bath and settle in London, and to Philip Thicknesse we owe some curious particulars of the alleged causes that induced the painter to transfer himself and his belongings to the capital. These are given by Thicknesse in a long story that readers of Gainsborough's biographies must know by heart, so frequently and so fully has it been quoted. Briefly, he says that Gainsborough, who had painted the well-known portrait of Mrs. Thicknesse in 1760, soon after his arrival in Bath, promised her many years after-

wards a companion portrait of her husband. This promise was made in the early part of 1774, and the portrait was to be a testimony of the painter's gratitude for the gift Mrs. Thicknesse had made to him of a *viol da gamba* of great age and value. Gainsborough, it seems, commenced a full-length portrait of Thicknesse, but after sketching in the head and a few details put the canvas on one side. He could not be induced to finish it, and ultimately returned the *viol da gamba* to Mrs. Thicknesse. Stripped of all elaboration and side issues, this is the gist of the story told by Thicknesse, and it is to this episode alone that the ex-Governor attributes Gainsborough's departure. "He certainly had never gone from Bath to London had not this untoward circumstance arisen between us; and it is no less singular that I, who had taken so much pains to remove him to Bath, should be the cause of driving him from thence." Fulcher, who bases his story on Thicknesse, says that at Bath:

"Gainsborough, for old associations' sake, suffered many annoyances which to his proud spirit were hard to bear. At length Thicknesse's conduct became intolerable and Gainsborough determined to rid himself of such an incubus. . . . Knowing that there was only one way of casting off this old man of the sea, Gainsborough resolved on immediately leaving Bath. Despatching his goods and chattels by Wiltshire's waggon, he took his place on the Bath coach and arrived in London in the summer of 1774."

All this I believe to be imaginary, except that Gainsborough certainly did leave Bath for London about the time mentioned. The touches about Wiltshire's waggon and the stage coach are merely picturesque, and for the rest there is no authority. Fulcher does not seem to have asked himself why Gainsborough should suddenly give up his house and the connection he had built up at Bath because of a misunderstanding with Thicknesse about the painting of a portrait. No doubt Gains-

borough was on intimate terms with Thicknesse, whom he had known since the Ipswich days, but he was in no degree dependent on the patronage of the ex-Governor. Why should a quarrel between the two drive Gainsborough to London, and what difference could it have made to him or his prosperity if he and Thicknesse were no longer friends? Gainsborough in 1774 was already a man of great reputation, and one of the most distinguished residents of Bath, and Thicknesse's boast of having been the cause of "driving him from thence" seems absurd when all the circumstances are considered.

It is not unlikely that the departure from Bath may have been preceded by a quarrel with Thicknesse, and his excessive vanity perhaps made him believe that this quarrel was the sole cause of Gainsborough's flight. But there is a more probable reason for the removal to London in the summer of 1774. It is to be found in a letter from Wright of Derby, who established himself at Bath in the following year. Wright was not a Gainsborough by any means, but he was a better painter than any other Bath man, and when he heard that the only artist of the first rank had gone to London he hastened to the western city in the confident hope of obtaining commissions for portraits.

Wright was bitterly disappointed, as will be seen by the letter in which he records his experiences. Writing from Bath on the 9th of February 1776, he says:

"I have now passed one season, the bigger of the two, without any advantage. The Duchess of Cumberland is the only sitter I have had, and her order for a full-length dwindled to a head only, which has cost me so much anxiety that I would rather have been without it; the great people are so fantastical and whining they create a world of trouble, though I have but the same fate as Sir Joshua Reynolds, who painted two pictures of Her Royal Highness and neither please."

He then complains of the jealousy of the other artists of the city, which is very injurious to him. But he thinks

that it will be hardly worth his while to stay and confute them considering how little business is done in the city —or has been done for four or five years previously.

" I have heard from London—and from several gentlemen here—that the want of business was the reason for Gainsborough's leaving Bath. Would I had known this sooner, for I much repent coming here."

Wright's letter shows that Gainsborough's popularity, or perhaps the fashion for portrait-painting in general, had waned in Bath. The days of the " shoals of sitters " mentioned by Underwood had passed away; and the great painter, at his zenith and conscious of exceptional powers, was anxious to try his strength with Sir Joshua and the other artists who worked in the larger field of London. These, and not the squabble with Thicknesse, were probably the reasons that induced Gainsborough to desert the banks of the Avon for those of the Thames.

With Gainsborough's departure from Bath we take leave of Philip Thicknesse for many years. He was to enjoy but for a short time the comfort of the beautiful new house in The Crescent, where he says the bargain was made about the portrait and the *viol da gamba*, and to which he had only recently removed from Walcot Parade. The ex-Governor was involved in financial difficulties caused by the loss of an action at law almost immediately after Gainsborough had left for London, and throughout the spring and early summer of 1775 he was making strenuous efforts to get rid of the house in The Crescent and all its contents. The house was offered for sale on the 2nd of March, and on the 25th of the same month the pictures, plate, books, music, and musical instruments were put up to auction. There were but few bidders, and in April, at the still unsold house in The Crescent, were to be seen " some good pictures by Gainsborough and other Masters in elegant gilt frames; a fine

Milanese fiddle, a treble Welch harp, a guitar, and other musical instruments." Thicknesse announced that all these articles were on view every day from eleven to three, with the prices marked on each lot.

What prices were placed upon the Gainsboroughs, or what became of most of them, I have been unable to discover, but the full-length portrait of Mrs. Thicknesse was not sold, and was still in the possession of that extraordinary woman when she died at a great age fifty years later. Mrs. Thicknesse, who after Gainsborough left Bath figures no more in his history, was one of the most brilliant amateur musicians of her day. She made a reputation as a writer, was accomplished in many other directions, and could converse with equal ease and fluency in French, German, Spanish, and Italian. Her physical endowments were no less remarkable, for we are told that at eighty-seven "her eyesight was as perfect as at twenty; her hair luxuriant and without a grey tress in it; her teeth—not one deficient—retaining their enamel and durability."

Thicknesse, who in April 1775 failed to find a purchaser for his house at Bath, made in May a despairing appeal to the King for assistance, on the ground of long service in several climates. The petition, though backed by two or three noblemen, was rejected, and in June he and his family set out for the Continent, where he believed that he could live at less expense than was possible in England. He remained abroad for some years, and contributed a number of descriptive articles signed "A Traveller" to the *St. James's Chronicle*, a journal with which he maintained a connection until nearly the end of his life. His intercourse with Gainsborough was not broken off by the Bath quarrel, to which perhaps the painter did not attach so much importance as Thicknesse imagined. Some sort of acquaintanceship was certainly kept up between them, and I think that Thicknesse was the writer of two or three letters about

Gainsborough's brother Humphry which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine;* and of another letter, defending the painter in the quarrel with the Academy, that was published in the *St. James's Chronicle* in 1784.

Shortly before Gainsborough left Bath a man connected with a noble family shot himself at a house in Orange Grove. The letters of the suicide, who was known to Thicknesse, showed that his death left a woman and child in London in actual want, and the ex-Governor raised a fund to help them. He obtained only twelve subscriptions, one of which was from Gainsborough, who was on his way to the theatre when Thicknesse met him and showed him a pathetic appeal from the woman. The tender-hearted Gainsborough was deeply touched. He returned at once to his house and wrote the following letter to Thicknesse:

"My dear Sir,—I could not go to the play to-night until I had relieved my mind by sending you the enclosed banknote, and beg you will transmit it to the afflicted woman by to-night's post.—Yours sincerely,

"Thomas Gainsborough."

Of his family and social life, whether in Bath or in London, very little is known. Fulcher says, "At Bath Gainsborough kept a good table and spent his money freely, features in his character the ex-Governor knew well how to appreciate. He often shared the painter's hospitality, and has recorded some of his host's sayings and doings on such occasions." But all this appears to be based on the statement by Thicknesse that he once went to supper at his friend's house. We know that Gainsborough had a spare bedroom in the house in The Circus, as he offered it to William Jackson; but so far from his keeping a good table Thicknesse states particularly that he was rarely allowed by his wife to entertain his friends at home, and that it was this restraint

that drove him into irregularities abroad. But if Gainsborough played on occasion at Bath without restraint or propriety he also worked hard, and he certainly left a number of pictures behind him when he went to London in 1774. John Britton the antiquarian says that as late as 1801 he saw in a house in The Circus more than fifty paintings and sketches from Gainsborough's brush.

Among Gainsborough's patrons in his later years at Bath Lord Radnor should not be forgotten. William, first Earl of Radnor, who was the son of Lord Folkestone, the original President of the Society of Arts, gave Gainsborough many commissions for portraits at Bath, and the prices paid for some of them are mentioned in the catalogue of the family pictures compiled by Helen Matilda, Countess of Radnor, and Mr. Barclay Squire. The first Earl sat himself for a half-length in 1770, and he notes in his account-book on January 5, 1772, "Paid Gainsborough for my picture, £63." In 1774 he paid the artist two hundred and fifty guineas for six other paintings of various members of his family. One of these is the beautiful study of the Hon. Edward Bouverie, painted when a boy of thirteen or fourteen, and shown wearing a blue Vandyke dress. This fine portrait, which was at the Royal Academy (Old Masters) in 1912, bears the date of 1773. Lord Radnor's interest in the artist was not confined to these portraits. It will be seen in the next chapter how his influence was exerted to obtain for Gainsborough a commission from the Society of Arts the year after he settled in London.

CHAPTER VI

LONDON, 1774–1776

Gainsborough in London—The harpsichord from Broadwood's—Schomberg House—The "three hundred a year" legend—The actual rent—Graham's Temple of Health—Where Gainsborough painted—The garden studios—The founder of Christie's—Death of Joshua Kirby—Gainsborough declines to serve on the Academy Council, but votes at many elections—Paints figures for Bach and Abel's concert room—Gainsborough and the Court—Inaccurate statements of his biographers—"A famous painter's in Pall Mall"—Gainsborough robbed by highwaymen—His nephew's watch—Capture of the highwaymen—Brother Humphry—Gainsborough prosperous but unhappy—A self-revealing letter—The painter's daughters—A curious commission from the Society of Arts.

It was in May or June 1774 that Gainsborough riding the grey horse given to him by Wiltshire, set out from Bath on his journey to the city in which he was to gain the friendship and patronage of the King and Queen; and to discover a powerful journalistic champion who, to the last day of the artist's life, supported him with never-failing zeal and courage. These were to come, but at the moment of Gainsborough's arrival in London the outlook was unpromising. The political horizon was clouded, the incident of the tea-chests at Boston harbour was of recent occurrence, and men's minds were too much occupied with the prospects of trouble with the American colonies to concern themselves with pictures or painters. In art Gainsborough's prospects were not encouraging. Sir Joshua Reynolds, against whom the traveller from Bath came to pit himself, was showing this year at the Royal Academy some of his finest canvases, including the magnificent group of *The Graces decorating a terminal figure of Hymen* that is now in the National Gallery, and the newcomer must have realised that even at his

best he could barely cope with such a master of portraiture as the President.

Whatever the reason may have been, Gainsborough probably left Bath, as Thicknesse says, at short notice, and an entry in the books of Messrs. Broadwood & Co., the piano manufacturers, suggests that his removal to London in 1774 was not anticipated in March of that year. Messrs. Broadwood sent to "Mr. Gainsborough, Painter, in the Circle, Bath," on March 11th, a harpsichord which had been selected on his behalf a few days earlier by Giardini the violinist. It is unlikely that he would have ordered such a large and heavy instrument as a harpsichord to be sent to Bath if he had thought it possible that he would be moving to London with all his belongings only a few weeks afterwards. The last glimpse we have of him at Bath is given in a letter, published in the reports of the Historical Commission, and dated April 13, 1774, in which Eliza Orlebar writes that on the day preceding she had visited the studios of Mr. Hoare and Mr. Gainsborough, and that "she greatly preferred the portraits by the latter, as they are such very good likenesses."

The exact date, hitherto unknown, when Gainsborough took the western portion of Schomberg House, I have been able to discover through the courtesy of Mr. John Hunt, the Town Clerk of Westminster, who examined the rate-books of the period at my request, and found that the painter's tenancy commenced at Midsummer 1774. At the same time Mr. Hunt's researches proved the inaccuracy of a Gainsborough legend that originated with Thicknesse and has been repeated by every biographer in turn. Thicknesse, in telling the story of the quarrel which he says drove the artist from Bath, writes: "Upon the receipt of that note he went directly to London, took a house in Pall Mall at three hundred pounds a year rent, and returned to Bath to pack up his goods and pictures." The Westminster rate-books show

that Gainsborough's rent in Pall Mall was not three hundred pounds a year but a hundred and fifty. This, for some unexplained reason, was reduced in 1783 to a hundred and twelve pounds, at which figure the rent remained until 1792, when Mrs. Gainsborough gave up possession.

Schomberg House, where Gainsborough lived until his death in 1788, was originally the residence of the Dukes of Schomberg. Afterwards it became the property of Lord Holdernesse, from whom it was acquired by John Astley, a painter and a fellow-student of Reynolds. According to a lengthy biography of Astley, published soon after his death in 1787, Lord Holdernesse offered him Schomberg House for £5000, and held to his offer, although he knew before the contract was signed that he could have had £7000 for it from Lord Melbourne. We are told that Astley, who had married a rich widow, spent another £5000 in altering the house. "The centre he himself inhabited, and raised that fine room where Dr. Graham, with such infamy to the police which suffered him, preceded Cosway. There, too, he built an attic story which, for the surprises of scenery in a town like London, should be seen by all who come to it."

Dr. Graham, whose lectures, with their demonstrations of the human figure unadorned, scandalised the town, was the notorious personage whose earth baths and electrical machine were tried upon Sir Walter Scott when a child in a vain effort to cure his lameness. Sir Walter, who thought that Graham had a touch of madness in his composition, remembered him at Edinburgh when he used to attend the Greyfriars Church in a gay suit of white and silver, with a *chapeau bras*, "and his hair marvellously dressed into a sort of double toupee, like the two towers of Parnassus. Lady Hamilton is said to have first enacted his Goddess of Health." The tradition that Nelson's enchantress posed at Graham's lectures appears to have no foundation in fact, but out of it has grown

the legend that Gainsborough painted from Lady Hamilton the picture in the National Gallery, *Musidora bathing her Feet.* The attractions of Graham's Temple of Health included the reading of lectures by Ann Curtis —to the horror of that embodiment of propriety, Mrs. Siddons, whose sister the lecturer was—but the noisy crowds who flocked to Pall Mall were drawn there by the Goddess of Health, the Celestial Bed, and similar unedifying spectacles. These ultimately brought down upon the head of Gainsborough's next-door neighbour the wrath and the interference of the Bishop of London.

The eastern wing of the former home of the Schombergs was pulled down more than sixty years ago, but the centre portion, unchanged externally, still stands in Pall Mall; and so, too, does Gainsborough's house, although described as " demolished " in one of the most recently published biographies of the artist.

At Schomberg House, as at the house in The Circus at Bath, we are confronted with the problem—where did Gainsborough paint ? The front of the house faces the north, the aspect usually preferred by artists, but no room in the front is suitable for the painting of any but small pictures. The portion of the building occupied by Gainsborough has a comparatively narrow frontage, and a third or more of this is taken up on each floor by small rooms projecting from the main wall above the entrance doorway. It has been suggested that Gainsborough used one of the front rooms as his studio, but it seems to me, after seeing the rooms, that this was impossible. We know that Gainsborough painted numerous full-length portraits and groups as well as large landscapes at Schomberg House. He painted standing, and used brushes with handles six feet long, and could still find room for the youthful J. T. Smith to stand behind him and watch him at work. This implies a fairly large studio, and as he admitted donkeys, pigs, and other animals into his painting-room it seems certain that it must have

been on the ground floor. Probably it was a large room built over the garden, of which more presently.

Entering Schomberg House by the doorway beneath the memorial tablet to Gainsborough, erected by the Society of Arts in 1881, the visitor finds himself in a square hall, on one side of which is a small room, long and narrow and lighted by a window looking on to Pall Mall. Passing through the square hall, a more spacious inner hall is reached, from whence a circular staircase leads to the upper part of the house. This inner hall covers nearly all the width of the house, and as it is lighted by a glass roof it is well adapted for the display of pictures. Gainsborough evidently used it for this purpose, as a visitor to his house in 1787 says that " in the hall there is a large landscape, and in the small room three or four landscapes, all lately painted by Gainsborough." The " small room " was probably the one adjoining the outer hall, with a window looking on to Pall Mall.

From the staircase hall a long passage leads to the large room already mentioned as built over the garden, and now used as a drawing office by members of the architectural staff of the War Office. The passage is no doubt the corridor which Beechey described as leading to Gainsborough's studio, and hung in the artist's life-time with unsold landscapes. The garden room is, roughly, about thirty-five feet in length by twenty-five in breadth and proportionately high, but the light, though ample in quantity, comes from a window looking south. Whether Gainsborough could have painted in a south light, or whether he had another window to the east or north, it is impossible to say ; but this room and another above it, similar in size, shape, and lighting, appear to have been the only places at Schomberg House in which he could have worked. In one of the two he may have exhibited his pictures after the quarrel with the Academy in 1784. Except the staircase hall there is no room in Schomberg House itself in which large

canvases could have been shown, and Gainsborough, in his first private exhibition of 1784, found room somewhere to hang ten full-length and twelve half or three-quarter-length portraits, in addition to subject pictures and landscapes.

In speaking of the building in the garden I am assuming that it was in existence in Gainsborough's time. I have no certain evidence on this point, but the building is marked on the large plan of Pall Mall drawn by T. Chawner of the Office of Works in 1796, only four years after Mrs. Gainsborough left Schomberg House. It seems likely that both the garden rooms mentioned were in existence and used by Gainsborough, as at the exhibition of his work held in 1789, a few months after his death, some of the pictures (one of them a very large landscape) were shown in " the upper room," and in the contemporary notes on the exhibition there are frequent mentions of the " rooms " in which the artist worked. Everything points to Gainsborough's use of some larger room than any of those contained in Schomberg House itself. The *Morning Herald* in its announcement of Gainsborough's first exhibition in 1784 says that he is preparing his " saloon " for the purpose; and the fact that seven hundred people visited the exhibition of 1789 on the last day suggests that it must have been held in fairly spacious apartments. It should be remembered that in these notes on Gainsborough in Pall Mall I am referring to the old house of the Dukes of Schomberg and not to the present Schomberg House close by it, now the residence of Prince Christian.

When Chawner made his plan in 1796 it was accompanied by some excellent drawings of the elevation of the houses in Pall Mall, which show Christie's sale-rooms adjoining Schomberg House on the eastern side. Here the auctioneer appears to have occupied two houses with a passage in the centre leading to a large room or hall which, as in the case of Gainsborough's house, almost

covered the garden. The painter was therefore only a few yards from the auction rooms in which he is said to have spent some of his happiest hours of relaxation. The founder of the firm of Christie was on the most friendly terms with Gainsborough, who painted a portrait of him which was shown at the Academy Exhibition of 1778, and for many years afterwards adorned the walls of the auction rooms. There is a story that it was placed there at Gainsborough's request, as an advertisement, but this is unlikely. In 1778 Gainsborough needed neither advertisement nor commissions, for he had then been settled in London for four years, and his position in the front rank of portrait-painters was assured. He was perhaps more useful to Christie than Christie was to him. The auctioneer, a shrewd and sensible man of business, is said to have made a practice of showing privately to the eminent artists of his day every importation of valuable pictures that was consigned to him from abroad, and among the artists whom he thus consulted was his neighbour Gainsborough.

A correspondent of the *Library of the Fine Arts*, writing about forty years after Gainsborough's death, when recalling the artists of a preceding generation, said of the master of Schomberg House " that whenever he appeared, either at a morning lounge, at Christie's amidst the enlightened and polite, or at My Lady's midnight rout surrounded by bowing beaux and curtseying belles, his gaiety enlivened every group. He knew everybody and everybody knew him ; he was, however, most at home with the worthies of the auction room." For some years Garrick was frequently his companion at Christie's, where the amusement caused by the humour common to both never failed to give an additional zest to the proceedings. Mr. Christie, says the same writer, often declared that the presence of this choice pair added fifteen per cent. to his commission on a sale.

The first year of Gainsborough's life in London was

not free from anxiety. He was a stranger, knowing few of his fellow-members of the Academy, and not much loved by any of them, and he had not yet obtained the support of the Rev. Henry Bate, then the editor of the *Morning Post*, who, in his sketch of Gainsborough's life, admits that the painter's earlier period in Pall Mall was spent "not very profitably." A great trouble was the death of Joshua Kirby, who had long been resident in London, where Gainsborough must have hoped to renew the close and happy intimacy of the old days at Ipswich. Kirby died on the 20th of June 1774, three or four days before the commencement of his friend's tenancy of Schomberg House. There was friction, too, with the Royal Academy, but this probably troubled Gainsborough but little. As he was now living in London he was appointed to the Council of the Academy at the meeting held on December 10, 1774, and even had a vote for the Presidentship, for which in this year West, Chambers, Dance, and Hone also received one or more proxies. The new members of Council elected with him were Barry, Cosway, and the miniature painter, Jeremiah Meyer.

That Gainsborough neglected his duties is shown by the following entry in the minutes of the Royal Academy Council of December 4, 1775: "Read the list of the Academicians eligible as Council for next year, and Mr. Gainsborough, having declined any office in the Academy and having never attended: Resolved, That his name be omitted." This decision was overruled at the General Assembly of December 11, when it was resolved "That Thomas Gainsborough, Esq., continues on the Council." But he never served, nor was his name placed again on the list, as it would have been if the laws of the Academy were observed. The rule governing this point was often infringed in the early years of the Academy's existence, and it was not until 1800, when Tresham, who had not been placed on the Council in his turn, complained to the

King, that the original plan of succession by rotation was ordered to be observed strictly, as it has been to this day.

Although he never served on the Council or assisted in the arrangement of the exhibitions, the minutes show that Gainsborough had more to do with the Academy than has hitherto been supposed. Northcote declared that he only once took part in its business, when he attended a meeting to vote for his friend Garvey, who was elected R.A. on the 11th of February 1783. This is erroneous, for Gainsborough voted at eight or nine elections either in person or by proxy, and two of his votes were given after the great quarrel of 1784, when he withdrew all his pictures from the exhibition. There are many incidental references to Gainsborough in the minutes, to some of which I shall have occasion to refer later on.

By his many friends among musicians Gainsborough was warmly welcomed on his arrival in London, and a letter in the Harris correspondence shows that he was soon busily engaged assisting Bach and Abel in the decoration of their new concert room, which was opened on the 1st of February 1775. Mrs. Harris, writing to her son in Berlin on the 3rd of February, says :

" Your father and Gertrude attended Bach's concert Wednesday; it was the opening of his new room, which by all accounts is the most elegant room in town; it is larger than Almack's. The statue of Apollo is placed just behind the orchestra, but it is thought too large and clumsy. There are ten other figures or pictures bigger than life. They are painted by some of our most eminent artists ; such as West, Gainsbro', Cipriani, &c. These pictures are all transparent and are lighted behind ; and that light is sufficient to illuminate the room without lustres or any candles appearing. The ceiling is domed and beautifully painted, with alto-relievos in all the piers. The pictures are chiefly fanciful. A Comic Muse by Gainsborough is most spoken of."

Nothing had been sent by Gainsborough to the Academies of 1773 or 1774, although in the latter year

he showed a portrait at the rival Free Society of Artists. Nor did he send to the Academy in 1775, when Reynolds, among other things, showed his idealised portrait of one of Gainsborough's favourite models, *Mrs. Sheridan as St. Cecilia*. The newspapers of 1775 note with regret the absence from the exhibition of Gainsborough, Dance, and Cipriani. "There is a great miss of some of the principal artists," says one of the critics, "and even those who have exhibited are very short of their former excellence."

We know little about Gainsborough's work at this period, but some of the statements made respecting it are certainly inaccurate. Cunningham, in speaking of the artist's earlier days in London, says: "A conversation or family piece of the King, the Queen, and the three Royal sisters was much admired"; and Sir Walter Armstrong adopts Cunningham's statement, and adds that the painting of this family group "turned the current of fashion strongly towards Pall Mall." No such picture as this family group is known to exist, and there is no record or tradition of any work of the kind. Cunningham's remark was based upon an inaccurate reading of Thicknesse, who mentions among Gainsborough's best-known portraits "his Majesty George the Third, the Queen, the three Royal sisters upon one canvas." Thicknesse meant by this not one picture but three, and Cunningham was misled by the punctuation of the ex-Governor.

According to Dr. Watkins, the biographer of Queen Charlotte, it was Joshua Kirby who first called the attention of George the Third to the merits of Gainsborough's work—a circumstance, says Watkins, "which that excellent painter ever remembered with gratitude." Kirby, whose position gave him access to the royal ear, probably lost no chance of furthering the interests of his dearest friend, and it may be that hopes of Court patronage were among the influences that drew Gainsborough from Bath to London. But Kirby's death, almost at the moment

of the painter's arrival in town, destroyed for the time all chance of obtaining commissions from Buckingham House, and upon this point Fulcher is as misinformed as Cunningham. He says that "before Gainsborough had been many months in London he received a summons to the Palace. It was soon known that the King and Queen had sat to him."

The King and Queen certainly did sit to Gainsborough, and more than once, but not until a much later period than 1774–5. The date is unknown of the painting of the portraits of their Majesties shown in the Royal Academy of 1781, but it could not have been as early as Fulcher states. A letter written by Gainsborough to the Hon. Thomas Stratford in 1777 proves that up to that time he had not succeeded in obtaining Court patronage. "If I ever have anything to do at St. James's," writes the artist, "it must be through your interest and singular friendship for me." But if Gainsborough secured no footing at Court until after 1777 there is reason to believe that he was painting royalties of some kind within a year of his settlement at Schomberg House. A paragraph in the *Morning Chronicle*, in April 1775, must, I think, refer to him. "The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester are often going to a famous painter's in Pall Mall; and 'tis reported that he is now doing both their pictures, which are intended to be presented to a Great Lady."

Later in the year 1775 George Selwyn took his daughter —or supposed daughter—to sit at Schomberg House. In a letter to Lord Carlisle he says: "I have been with Mie Mie to Gainsborough, to finish her picture." "Mie Mie," the little girl to whom Selwyn was so tenderly attached, was Maria Fagniani, afterwards the wife of the third Marquis of Hertford, satirised by Thackeray as Lord Steyne; and the mother of the fourth marquis, to whom more than any other person is due the formation of the Wallace Collection.

Gainsborough's adventure with highwaymen in 1775 has escaped the notice of every writer on the artist. It attracted considerable attention at the time, but less upon Gainsborough's account than upon that of the well-known musician who was robbed on the same occasion. The highwaymen, who were the dread of travellers throughout the eighteenth century, were especially daring at this period, when, as Walpole declared, "you were robbed every hundred yards." They spared few. Lord North, when Prime Minister, was robbed on Hounslow Heath, and Burke suffered a similar fate on Finchley Common. Highwaymen infested the suburbs of London, and the proprietors of Ranelagh took the precaution to advertise that for the safety of visitors to the Gardens "An armed guard on Horseback will patrol the road." Rowlandson, the caricaturist, had his watch and five guineas taken from him by two men in Wardour Street, who appeared, says a humorous chronicler of the occurrence, to have had some idea of Rowlandson's profession, as they commanded him to hand over his property "without making any wry faces." Gainsborough's friend, Christie the auctioneer, was eased of nine guineas when driving with two ladies near London; and Dr. Trusler, one of the proprietors of the *Morning Post*, was robbed, together with his wife, between Vauxhall and Clapham. The valiant editor of the *Morning Post* seems alone to have escaped the attentions of the gentlemen of the road, none of whom had the temerity to interfere with such a formidable personage as the Reverend Henry Bate.

Late on the evening of the 7th of June 1775, Gainsborough was returning to town in a chaise, when he was stopped on the main Western road, just before reaching Hammersmith, by two horsemen, who robbed him of two guineas and a watch. Apparently Gainsborough was one of a party, as John Christian Bach, who was in a carriage immediately in front of him, was robbed by

the same men. Abel, the *viol da gamba* player, whose music moved Gainsborough so strangely, was also of the company, but was not robbed, or at all events made no charge against either of the men when they were brought before Sir John Fielding at Bow Street. It speaks well for the energy of Sir John's officers that the thieves were arrested in the course of a day or two with some of the stolen property in their possession. The highwaymen, Henry McAllister and Archibald Girdwood, were traced through the agency of the ostler of the Star Tavern, Blackman Street, Borough, from whom their horses were hired. They were lodging together, close at hand, in the house of a surgeon in Kent Street, and in their room Sir John Fielding's clerk, Mr. Bond, found Bach's watch. Bach's chain and seals, and Gainsborough's watch, were found in Girdwood's pocket.

Both men were committed by Sir John Fielding, and tried twice at the Old Bailey—before Baron Hotham for robbing Gainsborough, and before the Recorder for robbing Bach. The composer had lost a gold watch valued at £20, a chain worth £3, and one guinea in cash. In giving his evidence he explained that he was coming to town on the evening of the 7th of June and was attacked by a highwayman about half a mile from Hammersmith. "He cried, 'Stop, your money or your watch!' That waked me, for I was asleep in my carriage. He took my watch and a guinea; the business was very soon over. I should not know the person who robbed me. It was about half-past nine or near ten o'clock." When Girdwood and McAllister were brought before Baron Hotham they were charged "that they in the King's highway in and upon Thomas Gainsborough did make an assault, putting him in corporeal fear and danger of his life, and taking from his person a watch with the inside case made of metal and the outside case covered with shagreen, and two guineas in money, the property of the said Thomas, June 7th." In the witness-

box Gainsborough testified that on the occasion in question he was robbed of some money and a watch in a shagreen case; but although the watch had been found in the pocket of the prisoner Girdwood, both men for some reason were acquitted on this charge, and Girdwood alone was convicted of robbing Bach. However, there were other charges against the two highwaymen, and when the sessions ended on the 17th of July William McAllister and John Girdwood were sentenced to death. Of the fate of Girdwood I have found no record, but McAllister was hanged at Tyburn on the 16th of August 1775.

One interesting point remains to be mentioned concerning the watch of which Gainsborough was robbed on the evening of the 7th of June. In giving his evidence at Bow Street before Sir John Fielding he said that the watch did not belong to him but to a relation from whom he had borrowed it on the day of the robbery. The relation was his nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, who at the trial at the Old Bailey identified the metal watch in a shagreen case, No. 1271, maker H. Betterton, and claimed it as his property. Gainsborough Dupont was himself robbed on the road thirteen years later. A few weeks after the death of his uncle, in 1788, he was travelling one night in October in a postchaise from Windsor to Richmond, where the Gainsboroughs had a house, when he was stopped by two footpads, who took from him three guineas and some silver. He was also robbed of a watch, but as no description was given it is impossible to say whether it was the same one he had lost and recovered before. One of the thieves who had stopped the postchaise returned to it before Dupont drove off and gave him back sufficient money to pay the tolls, a courtesy that was not uncommon among highwaymen and footpads. At the same time he apologised to the artist for robbing him, and declared that distress alone had driven him to such a desperate course.

John Christian Bach, Gainsborough's fellow-victim in

the affair with the highwaymen, was the youngest son of the great John Sebastian Bach, and himself a musician of some eminence. He wrote several operettas and many compositions for the piano, and was conductor to Queen Charlotte. John Christian Bach, who lived for many years in England, was the inseparable companion and partner of Abel, who was with him on the night of the robbery. The two musicians shared a house between them, and were both connoisseurs of pictures and prints. Angelo says that Bach used to listen to Gainsborough's musical performances, and after interrupting them with an occasional ironical "Bravo!" would at length push the painter from his seat at the harpsichord, upon which he would then "flourish voluntaries as if inspired." Bach died in poverty in 1782, and is buried in the churchyard of St. Pancras.

After his removal to London Gainsborough corresponded regularly with his sister, Mrs. Gibbon, who let apartments at Bath; and he appears to have maintained friendly relations with the other members of his family, although his patience was tried by frequent appeals for money from that ingenious but half-crazy inventor, his brother John. Gainsborough was much attached to his brother Humphry, who at this time was the pastor of the Independent chapel in South Street, Henley. Humphry Gainsborough shared with John a natural faculty for mechanics and engineering, but he had a power of applying his knowledge to practical ends that was denied to his eldest brother. He was awarded a premium by the Society of Arts for designs for a drill-plough and a tide-mill, and according to Mr. G. D. Leslie, R.A., who has an interesting note on Humphry Gainsborough in *Our River*, he superintended the making of several new roads in and near Henley, constructed the parochial weighing machine, and designed the adjoining locks in the Thames.

Of the locks at Henley he had charge, as a letter shows which Gainsborough wrote to Mrs. Gibbon in November

1775, not long after Humphry had lost his wife, whose death is recorded in an epitaph on the walls of the South Street chapel.

"We return you our best thanks," says Gainsborough to his sister, "for the excellent present of fish, which turned out as good as ever was eaten, and came very timely for Brother Humphry to take part with us. He went home to Henley to-day, having been with us ten days, which was as long as he could well be absent from his business of collecting the tolls upon the river. He was as well as could be expected, considering his affliction for the loss of his poor wife."

Gainsborough in another part of this letter mentions an epidemic of influenza that was then prevailing in London and had attacked all the family at Schomberg House, and after congratulating his sister upon the success of her lodging-house, concludes:

"I told Humphry you were a rank Methodist, who says you had better be a Presbyterian, but I say Church of England. It does not signify what if you are but free from hypocrisy and don't set your heart upon worldly honours and wealth."

Six weeks afterwards, at Christmas 1775, Gainsborough sent to Mrs. Gibbon another and longer letter, which is more self-revealing than anything else in his correspondence. Written a year and a half after his arrival in London, it is the letter of a man unhappy and despondent in spite of the material prosperity it describes:

"Dear Sister,—I received yours and am glad your Houses and every thing go on so much to your satisfaction. I have always wish'd you happy, though sometimes we have differ'd a little in our opinions. I did all in my power to comfort poor Humphry, and should have been glad of his company a little longer, had not his business called him hence.

"What will become of me time must show; I can only say that my present situation with regard to encouragement is all that heart can wish, but as all worldly success is precarious I don't build happiness, or the ex-

pectation of it, upon present appearances. I have built upon sandy foundations all my life long. All I know is that I live at a full thousand pounds a year expense, and will work hard and do my best to go through withal; and if that will not do let those take their lot of blame and sufferings that fall short of their duty, both towards me and themselves. Had I been blessed with your penetration and blind eye towards fool's pleasures, I had steer'd my course better, but we are born with different Passions and gifts, and I have only to hope that the Great Giver of All will make better allowance for us than we can make for one another.

"I could now enter into particulars as my heart finds itself affected, but what would it all signify? If I tell you my wife is weak but good, and never much formed to humour my Happiness, what can you do to alter her? If I complain that Peggy is a sensible good Girl, but Insolent and proud in her behaviour to me at times, can you make your arm long enough to box her ears for me whilst you live at Bath? And (what has hurt me most of late) were I to unfold a secret and tell you that I have detected a sly trick in Molly by a sight I got of one of her Letters, forsooth, to Mr. Fischer, what could all your cleverness do for me there? and yet I wish for your Head-piece to catch a little more of the secret, for I don't choose to be flung under the pretence of Friendship. I have never suffered that worthy Gentleman ever to be in their Company since I came to London; and behold while I had my eye upon Peggy, the other Slyboots, I suppose, has all along been the Object. Oh, d—n him, he must take care how he trips me off the foot of all happiness.

"I desire, my Dear Sister, you will not impart a syllable of what you have here, and believe me ever yours most affectionately,

"THOS. GAINSBOROUGH.

"*December* 26, 1775.

"Compliments of this happy season to you and love to Sally.

"*P.S.*—She does not suspect I saw the letter."

It is clear from this that Gainsborough's relations with his women-kind were no more sympathetic in London

MRS. FISCHER (MARY GAINSBOROUGH)

By permission of Mr. Adolph Hirsch

than they had been at Bath two or three years earlier, when he complained to William Jackson of the doings of "these fine ladies with their tea-drinkings, dancings, and husband-huntings," and avowed his longing to escape to some quiet village where he could paint landscape and pass the rest of his life in quietness and ease. Gainsborough, in the same letter to Jackson, expressed a fear that with all their gaieties his girls would fail to find husbands, and it is curious that with the exception of Fischer, who married the younger daughter Mary (Molly), the name of no suitor is mentioned in connection with either of them. Stranger still is the almost entire absence of any reference to Gainsborough's daughters in the correspondence of his friends or in the numerous memoirs of the period. Both Margaret and Mary were handsome and accomplished women, and apparently of unblemished reputation, and they must have been acquainted both in Bath and London with many of the people eminent in the social, musical, and dramatic worlds with whom their father was on intimate terms. Yet I have been able to find nothing about them anywhere except a few words in Thicknesse; a passing mention in Parke of Mary's marriage to Fischer; and the reference to Margaret's illness at Bath in the letter quoted earlier from Palmer to Garrick.

Of Gainsborough's rapid increase in prosperity, "all that the heart could wish," there are several indications in his correspondence within two or three years after his removal to town. We know that he kept a footman, who was afraid to venture out into Pall Mall for fear of being impressed for the sea-service—the only service he was fit for in the opinion of his master: and that a coach was included in the Schomberg House establishment is evident from a letter in which Gainsborough mentions a journey to Ipswich made by his wife and daughters. They had been invited thither to stay for a fortnight with the Kilderbees, with whom the artist and his wife

had been intimate when they lived at Ipswich. Samuel Kilderbee, to whose friendship with Gainsborough I have already referred, lived in a house near Queen Street, not far from the garden in which Thicknesse was deceived by the effigy of Tom Peartree. A man of substance, he was an attorney who for several years held the post of Town Clerk of Ipswich; but the Gainsborough ladies, fresh from London, were perhaps too conscious of their own dignity and importance to get on comfortably with his family, and their stay with the Kilderbees was shorter than had been intended originally.

"I packed them off," said Gainsborough, "in their own coach with David on horseback; and Molly wrote to me to let me know that they had arrived very safe—but somehow or other they seem desirous of returning rather sooner than the proposed time, as they desire me to go for them next Tuesday; the bargain was that I should fetch them home. I don't know what's the matter; either people don't pay them honour enough for ladies that keep a coach, or else Madam is afraid to trust me alone in this great town."

Gainsborough was unrepresented at the Academy in 1776, as he had been in the three preceding summers. But 1776 was by no means a year of idleness, and he executed, among other commissions, one of a singular nature for the Society of Arts. It was to paint a portrait of the Society's first President, Lord Folkestone, father of the first Earl of Radnor, who had died fifteen years earlier, in 1761. A full-length portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds of the second President, Lord Romney, had lately come into the Society's possession, and it was thought fit and proper that a companion portrait of the first President should be painted to hang by its side. Early in 1774 a deputation from the Society waited on Lord Radnor to ask him to lend for the purpose of being copied the three-quarter-length portrait of his father that Hudson had painted in 1749. Lord Radnor agreed,

and after some negotiations with other artists Nathaniel Dance, R.A., was asked to paint an enlarged and altered version of Hudson's work, "a whole-length portrait drawn in the proper Coronation robes and the same size as the portrait of Lord Romney." The price of fifty guineas was agreed upon, and the commission was given in February 1774, but by the end of the year the work was not even commenced. Illness and great pressure of other business were the excuses tendered, and more time was given, but finally Dance, who throughout appears to have treated the Society with discourtesy, threw up the commission.

Lord Radnor had now to be approached again for permission to allow another artist to make the copy, and he, after expressing his indignation at the behaviour of Dance, suggested the employment of Gainsborough, who, as we have seen, had painted at Bath not long before the portraits of his lordship and several members of his family. "Mr. Dance," wrote Lord Radnor from Longford Castle, "has for two summers been in possession of the picture under a repeated promise of completing the copy before winter. As Mr. Gainsborough, since the appointment of Mr. Dance, is settled in London, perhaps the Society may think him the properest person to make the copy." Gainsborough was applied to, and his letter of acceptance is still in the possession of the Society of Arts:

"Sir,—Agreeable to the obliging order of the Society for a full-length portrait of the late Lord Folkestone, I will take particular care to execute it in my best manner, and to get it done by the beginning of October next.—I am, Sir, your most obliged and obedient servant,

"Thos. Gainsborough.

"Pall Mall, *December* 11, 1775."

The copy of Hudson's portrait, to which Gainsborough added a pair of legs and a fine sky with a distant glimpse of St. Paul's Cathedral, was delivered at the Adelphi in

October 1776, and was received with approval. The artist was informed that the Society was "highly satisfied with his masterly performance," and he was requested to mention the remuneration which he expected. Nothing had been agreed, and Gainsborough asked a hundred guineas, the price, he said, that he usually received for a whole-length portrait. And this, although double the sum that Dance was to have received, was paid without demur. The head of this portrait of Lord Folkestone was engraved by Sherwin, and forms the frontispiece to the second volume of the Society's *Transactions*, published in 1784.

CHAPTER VII

THE REVEREND HENRY BATE

The champion of Gainsborough—" A magnificent piece of humanity "—Helps to found the *Morning Post*—His influence on journalism—Defends Mrs. Hartley at Vauxhall—Thrashes the bully—The procession in Piccadilly—Misreadings of Walpole—The *New Morning Post*—Bate engages Mrs. Siddons for Garrick—His art criticisms in the *Morning Post*—An apology—Founds the *Morning Herald*—Adopts the name of Dudley—Appointed a prebendary of Ely—Created a baronet—The patron of Morland—His portrait by Gainsborough in the National Gallery—His notes on Gainsborough in the *Morning Herald*.

BEFORE attempting to deal with the events of the year which witnessed the reappearance of Gainsborough at the Academy and the commencement of the most brilliant and fruitful portion of his career, it will be necessary to say something about the life and journalistic ventures of that remarkable personage the Reverend Henry Bate, afterwards Sir Henry Bate-Dudley, whose devotion to Gainsborough, and constant championship of the artist in the newspapers with which he was connected, have long been forgotten. Most of the large amount of new information in this volume concerning Gainsborough's work in London is given on the authority of Bate, who is mentioned as a sitter only in all the previous works on the artist. There is not a word in one of them concerning his friendship with Gainsborough, or any allusion to the notes which he wrote and published for years on Gainsborough's pictures.

The son of a country clergyman who had his quiverful of sons and daughters, Bate was sent by his father to Oxford, and was afterwards ordained by Terrick, Bishop of London. He seems, however, to have been connected

with newspapers from an early period of his life, for he was only twenty-seven years old when, in 1772, he helped to found the *Morning Post*, of which journal he was editor, except for an interval of two or three months, until he left it to establish the *Morning Herald*. Bate was a man of thews and sinews, "a magnificent piece of humanity," as Angelo calls him, with undaunted courage and resolution that never failed him at the most critical moments. He had many enemies, and doubtless many failings, but all who knew him in private life seem to agree in speaking of him as one of the kindest and most hospitable of men. On the other hand he was detested by Walpole, and disliked by Dr. Johnson, who allowed him no good qualities but courage. It was Bate's prowess with his fists, however, which on more than one occasion brought him into prominence, and is perhaps responsible for the idea that he was a person of noisy and rowdy habits. It will be remembered that Leslie, in his life of Sir Joshua Reynolds, speaks of Bate with a shade of contempt as "the uproarious clerical editor of the *Morning Post*," but Bate in reality was anything but uproarious.

Bernard the actor gives a description of his appearance and manner that seem to fit the man we see in the full-length by Gainsborough that was exhibited in the Academy of 1780 and is now owned by Lady Burton. "Bate," says the actor, "was a very quiet and gentlemanly man, who always laughed heartily but spoke seldom. He was built upon the scale of my friend George Parker, which is to say he had a very clerical appearance. He looked big, benevolent, and thoughtful, and by a stranger might easily have been mistaken for a parson *incog.*" If not altogether intellectual, Bate had some scholarship, and was endowed with so large a share of common sense and business aptitude that Garrick engaged Mrs. Siddons solely on the strength of his recommendation.

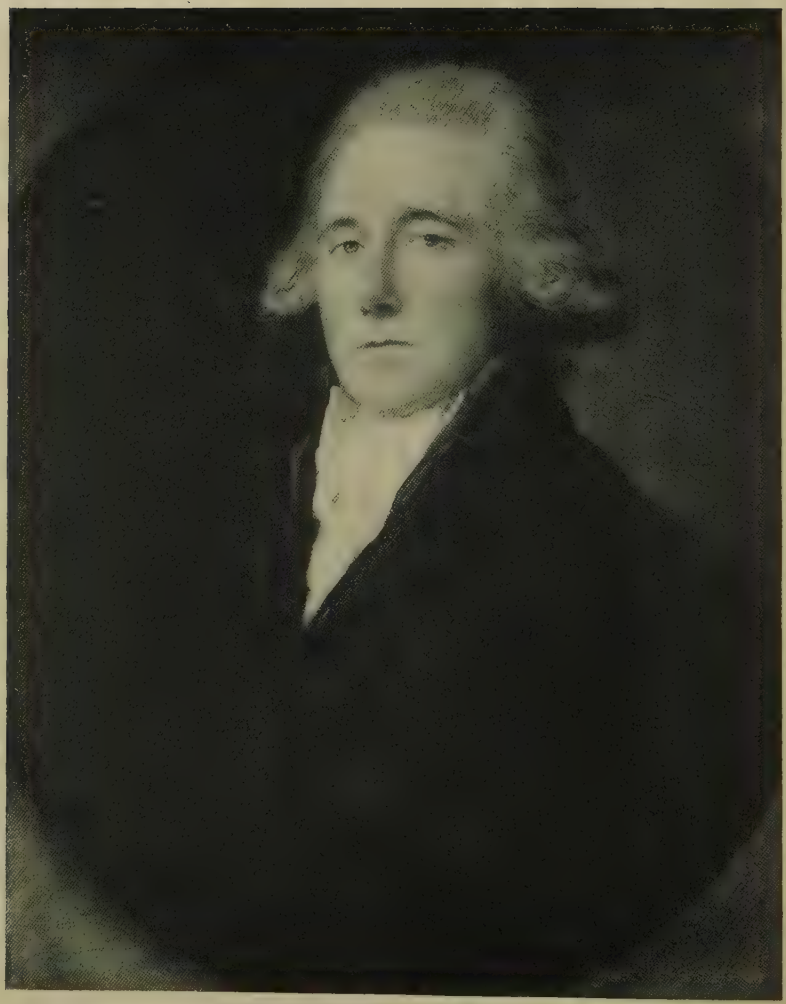
If Garrick used Bate on occasion Bate did not hesitate

to apply for the actor's support in aid of the *Morning Post* in the early days when the existence of that journal was precarious. When Garrick gave up the management of Drury Lane in 1776 Bate begged him to try to obtain from the succeeding proprietors the whole or part of the future advertisements for the *Morning Post*. "The object," wrote Bate, "would be considerable to me, and I think their end would be fully answered in advertising with us. You hinted some time ago that Linley spoke something of the playbills being given in common to the four papers; if you cannot serve the *Morning Post* in particular, favour that plan as much as possible and you will much oblige me."

Bate was, for his day, a capital journalist, although many of the anecdotes and paragraphs in the *Morning Post* and the *Morning Herald* are tinged with a coarseness that would make their appearance impossible in a modern English newspaper. There is a tradition that Sheridan, who was a friend of Bate, was responsible for some of the more daring of these notes. But Bate wrote for a public that had few or none of the present-day refinements, and was accustomed to hear a spade called a spade in the frankest fashion, and his comments on men and things, if sometimes indelicate, were never dull. Taylor, himself a contemporary journalist of wide experience, thought that Bate's influence on the newspapers of his day was on the whole excellent. "There was a sportive severity in his writings which gave a new character to the public press, as the newspapers, before the *Morning Post* appeared, were generally dull, heavy, and insipid. It may be said that he was too personal in his strictures in general, and in his allusions to many characters of his time; but it may be said, also, that they were generally characters of either sex who had rendered themselves conspicuous for folly, vice, or some prominent absurdity by which they became proper objects for satirical animadversion. Such effusions of his pen brought him into

hostile collision with some of the persons whom he censured, but he always manfully supported his character, and was wholly incapable of degrading concession or compromising artifice."

He was keenly interested in country life and every kind of sport; and in the drama, music, and fine arts. The writer of the libretto of *The Flitch of Bacon*, he was the patron of Shield, the composer of the music for that work, and was something of a musician himself. He played the violoncello, an instrument he had studied under Newby, the principal 'cellist at Drury Lane Theatre. Parke in his *Musical Memoirs* recalls a Sunday evening supper at Bate's house, at the time he was editing the *Morning Herald*, and lived in York Buildings, Buckingham Street. The party was very small, consisting of only Mr. and Mrs. Bate and two or three friends, one of whom was Shield. *The Flitch of Bacon*, in the production of which Bate and Shield had collaborated, had been played for the first time only a few days before the supper-party, at which a brace of partridges was one of the dishes. Mrs. Bate, who presided at this informal banquet, cut up one of the birds and passed it on a dish to Shield, asking him to help her by distributing it to other members of the company. Shield, his mind wholly engrossed in his music, took the dish without noticing the request of his hostess, and remarking that she had served him very liberally, placed it before him and quickly consumed the entire partridge, to the mingled amusement and disappointment of the remainder of the party, who had to be content with one bird between them. An old acquaintance and admirer of Bate, who wrote some reminiscences of the parson-editor which were published soon after his death, gave a list of several distinguished persons whom he had supported and encouraged, and declared enthusiastically that he was the patron of every man of merit who needed or solicited his assistance.



THE REV. HENRY BATE
(Sir Henry Bate Dudley)

National Gallery

" To him the country is in a great measure indebted for one of its ornaments—Gainsborough. His patronage of this excellent painter in early life principally contributed to his subsequent success." This estimate of Bate's biographer is exaggerated, for Gainsborough was prominent before the foundation of the newspapers in which his pictures were acclaimed. Yet his debt to Bate was a large one, for no man ever had a more faithful friend and supporter than the painter found in the journalist. Henry Bate loved Gainsborough as an artist and as a man, and he lost no chance of furthering his interests in the *Morning Post* so long as he had authority, and in the *Morning Herald* from the date of its commencement. And Bate's interest in Gainsborough did not cease with the artist's death. He did everything possible in the way of notices and advertisements in the *Morning Herald* to help Mrs. Gainsborough to dispose of the pictures and drawings bequeathed to her by her husband, and at the second sale at Schomberg House Bate was himself the purchaser of two or three canvases at high prices. Nor did he fail, subsequently, to say a good word for Gainsborough Dupont whenever an opportunity presented itself; and he attacked the Academy hangers furiously in 1790 for daring to place " no higher than the knee" Dupont's portrait of his famous uncle, whose death had taken place two years earlier.

When Gainsborough came from Bath to London in 1774 the story of a famous encounter at Vauxhall was still fresh in the public memory. It was an encounter in which Bate checked and chastised some fashionable bullies who were tormenting an unoffending actress, and thrashed unmercifully a professional prize-fighter disguised as a gentleman who was their paid champion. This affray, at one of the gayest and most popular places of public resort, created an extraordinary sensation, and there are many references to it in the magazines and newspapers of the time. It was this episode

that gained for Bate the title of "The Fighting Parson."

The actress protected by Bate in 1773 was the auburn-haired Mrs. Hartley, whose grace and beauty had captivated London, despite an inharmonious voice and a diction so rapid that it was almost inarticulate. Mrs. Hartley, of whom Garrick said he had never seen a finer creature ("her make is perfect"), often sat to Sir Joshua Reynolds. In the year of the disturbance at Vauxhall he exhibited the portrait of her as *A Nymph with Young Bacchus*, which was presented to the National Gallery in 1903 by the late Sir William Agnew. It was originally in the possession of Lord Carysfort, who saw it while it was at the Academy and bought it from Sir Joshua for fifty pounds. Mrs. Hartley's portrait by Reynolds now, by a curious chance, hangs in the same room at the National Gallery with the admirable study of her champion by Gainsborough. More curious is the fact that Mrs. Hartley and Bate, both of whom lived to old age, died on the same day in 1824. Bate, who was Mrs. Hartley's escort on the night when he thrashed the bully, was at that time engaged to her sister, whom he married in 1773, a few weeks after the incident at Vauxhall.

I do not know when the acquaintanceship between Gainsborough and Bate commenced, but probably it was not until after the summer of 1775, or the editor of the *Morning Post* would certainly not have missed the opportunity of commenting on the robbery of his friend by the highwaymen, which he reports only in the briefest fashion in his journal. But whenever the acquaintance may have begun, Bate had little opportunity of helping Gainsborough in the *Morning Post* until the spring of 1777, when the artist exhibited at the Academy for the first time since 1772. When the Academy of 1777 was opened Bate was firmly installed in his position as editor of the paper, after a succession of violent quarrels among the proprietors in which he and his following had proved

victorious. One of the incidents of these quarrels has been recorded in a well-known passage in the correspondence of Horace Walpole, in which he describes the march through Piccadilly of a band of men hired by the managers of the *Morning Post* to advertise the paper.

In the catalogue of the Gainsborough Exhibition held at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885, F. G. Stephens quotes this passage in his copious notes about the pictures that have proved useful to later writers on the artist. But in this particular instance Stephens made a slip. He misread Walpole, and his misreading has led one of Gainsborough's biographers into inextricable confusion in the attempt to identify the *Morning Herald*, Bate's second venture, with a short-lived journal called the *New Morning Post*. Stephens, who in the Gainsborough catalogue devotes considerable space to Bate and his affairs, says that a characteristic glimpse of him is contained in the before-mentioned letter by Walpole, which is addressed to Lady Ossory, and is dated November 13, 1776. This is the passage from Walpole's letter quoted by Stephens:

"Yesterday, just after I arrived, I heard drums and trumpets in Piccadilly. I looked out of the window and saw a procession with streamers flying. At first I thought it was a press-gang, but seeing the corps so well dressed, like Hussars in yellow, with blue waistcoats and breeches and high caps, I concluded it was some new body of our allies (Hessian mercenaries) or a regiment newly raised and with new regimentals for distinction. I was not totally mistaken, for the Colonel is a new ally. In short this was a procession set forth by Mr. Bate, Lord Lyttleton's chaplain and the author of the old *Morning Post*, and meant as an appeal to the town against his antagonist, the new one. I did not perceive it but the musicians had masks. On their caps was written *The Morning Post* and they distributed handbills. I am sure there were at least between thirty and forty, and this mummery must have cost a great deal of money. Are we not quite distracted, reprobate, absurd, beyond all people

that ever lived? The new *Morning Post*, I am told, for I never take in either, exceeds all the most outrageous Billingsgate that ever was heard."

Commenting on this passage Stephens says, "The new *Morning Post* was of course the *Morning Herald*." It was, of course, nothing of the kind, for Bate did not found the *Morning Herald* until 1780, four years later. But, apart from this, it is singular that so observant a man as Stephens should have failed to understand what Walpole makes so clear, that the procession was not in favour of the *New Morning Post* but an appeal against it—"set forth," as Walpole says, "by Mr. Bate, author of the old *Morning Post*."

The story of the *New Morning Post* is worth recalling, for it deals with a forgotten episode in the history of a great London newspaper—the first newspaper that championed Gainsborough. In the various histories of journalism there is no mention of the *New Morning Post*, which was founded by some of the partners in the original *Morning Post* who had seceded from the paper and claimed its title. The seceders, in the first instance, brought out another *Morning Post*, which was published by G. Corral, on November 9, 1776, and with the idea of giving it a respectable appearance of age, was numbered 2004. The original *Morning Post*, No. 1262, was published as usual on the same day by R. Bell, and for a short time two rival but dissimilar *Morning Posts* were issued from different offices. The Corral party in the first issue of their version stated that the licentiousness of the old *Morning Post* had induced them to found another *Morning Post*, "projected and conducted on very different and opposite principles."

An order from the Court of Chancery, granted on the application of Bate and his two partners, the Rev. Dr. Trusler and Mr. R. Bell, soon cut short the career of the second *Morning Post*, which Corral reissued immediately under the title of the *New Morning Post*. The

proprietors of this journal, which is the one Stephens confused with the *Morning Herald*, lost no time in proclaiming that the title had been altered only "that it may not be mistaken for the scandalous print which has hitherto pestered the public." A day or two later they complain bitterly of the Piccadilly procession seen by Walpole, and protest against the methods of advertising employed by Bate, who "instead of circulating his journal in the usual manner of business, with the other papers, picked up a lot of vagabonds, clothed them like antics, and sent them blowing horns about the town to the annoyance of every neighbourhood in which they were not silenced as a common nuisance."

However, Bate's methods proved efficacious. The new venture was unable to compete with the original *Morning Post*, which the parson-editor conducted successfully for three or four years afterwards. His rule, though it led to prosperity, was not peaceful, and he was obliged to fight several duels in defending statements that appeared in his paper. In one of these duels his antagonist was a former contributor, an Irishman named Barlow, who, unable to obtain satisfaction at the office of the paper, wrote to the editor telling him that he was "a cowardly poltroon and a rascal"; but in challenging Mr. Bate to fight with any weapons was careful to add "boxing excepted." The editor of the *Morning Post*, nothing loth, agreed to pistols, and the meeting took place in Hyde Park at six in the morning, with no other result than a slight injury to Bate's hand caused by the bursting of his weapon.

The *Morning Herald* was established in 1780, when Bate quarrelled with his co-proprietors of the *Morning Post* about a libel on the Duke of Richmond. The new journal appears to have been immediately successful. Only a week after the publication of the first number, Bate, its editor and sole proprietor, claimed that the *Morning Herald* was already as superior to the *Morning*

Post in point of sale "as we flatter ourselves it is and ever will be in point of conduct." Three weeks later he says that the sale of his paper is more extensive than that of the *Morning Post* ever was, and offers to prove his assertion any day at the office where the copies were stamped for the then existing newspaper tax. The two papers at this time were full of mutual recriminations, but in spite of the success of the *Morning Herald* the laugh at first was against Bate, who was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment for the libel on the Duke of Richmond which had appeared in the *Morning Post* while he was still editing that journal. Part of this he served and was then released unconditionally, after declining to make any terms with an intermediary sent by the Duke to the prison. Soon afterwards it was the turn of the *Morning Herald* to triumph, for Mr. Jackman, the editor of the *Morning Post*, was indicted for publishing a libel on the Reverend Henry Bate, editor of the *Morning Herald*, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment and to pay a fine of a hundred pounds.

In an earlier paragraph I have referred to the engagement of Mrs. Siddons by Garrick on the strength of Bate's report of her acting at Cheltenham. The memoirs of Mrs. Siddons appear to contradict this, as according to her biographer Campbell, she said that Garrick sent the actor, King, to see her playing in *The Fair Penitent*, and through King, engaged her at five pounds a week for Drury Lane. Perhaps Mrs. Siddons, who was old when she wrote her memoirs, had forgotten the particulars of the engagements of her youth, for the following letters, which are not published in the correspondence of Garrick, prove conclusively that Bate was the original envoy of the actor. The first letter is written by Garrick from his house at Hampton on July 31, 1775:

"DEAR BATE,—If you pass by Cheltenham on your way to Worcester I wish you would see an actress there, a

Mrs. Siddons ; she has a desire, I hear, to try her fortune with us ; if she seems in your eyes worthy of being transplanted pray desire to know upon what conditions she would make the trial and I will write to her the post after I have received your letter. Pay our compliments to your Lady and accept our warmest wishes for an agreeable journey and safe return to London.—Yours, my dear sir, most sincerely,

"DAVID GARRICK."

Bate made a favourable report upon the abilities of Mrs. Siddons, and Garrick wrote to him as follows from Hampton on the 15th of August:

"DEAR BATE,—Ten thousand thanks for your very clear, agreeable and friendly letter; it pleased me much, and whoever calls it a jargon of unintelligible stuff should be knocked down if I were near him. I must desire you to assure the lady with my best compliments that she may depend upon any reasonable and friendly encouragement in my power; and at the same time you must intimate to the husband that he must be satisfied with *the state of life to which it has pleased heaven to call her.* You see how much I think myself obliged by your kind offices by the flattering quotations I make from your *own book* (Garrick is referring to the fact that Bate is in orders). . . . If she has merit, and I am sure by your letter she must have, and will be governed by me, I will make her theatrical fortune ; if any lady begins to play us tricks I will immediately play off my masked battery of Siddons against her. I should be glad to know her cast of parts, or rather what parts she has done and in what she likes herself best—those I would like to have marked. . . . Pray let me hear from you again in answer to this. I make no compliments or excuses to you for the trouble I give you because I feel by myself that you take pleasure in obliging me.—I am most sincerely yours,

"DAVID GARRICK.

"Mrs. Garrick joins with me in every good wish for you and your Lady."

Although Bate had no opportunity of writing about the work of Gainsborough until 1777, he had always made it a rule to publish reviews of the Academy Exhibition in the *Morning Post*, as he did afterwards in the *Morning Herald*. The first year in which notices of the Royal Academy appeared in the *Morning Post* was 1773, when the tone of the criticisms was so severe that a protest was made on behalf of the younger men, some of whom alleged that they had been treated with injustice. In the following year, in a prefatory note to the review of the Exhibition of 1774, Bate admitted the unnecessary harshness of the earlier criticisms. Replying to the protest he said :

" The Editor of the *Morning Post* is so well convinced of the truth and justice of the foregoing remarks that he hopes he shall stand excused if he leaves the public to judge a little more for themselves. Anything, however, glaringly absurd will be taken notice of and properly reprehended by the conductors of this paper. The following pictures in the exhibition of the Royal Academy in Pall Mall are among the number of the best, and particularly demand the attention of the spectator."

This was followed by a list of the selected works with the names of the painters, and in some cases with a few lines of description.

The *Morning Herald* was for many years under the control of its original proprietor and editor, who, however, remained in orders all his life. He bought the advowson of a valuable living in Essex, which proved to be a most unfortunate bargain, and died Rector of Willingham in Cambridgeshire, and a Prebendary of Ely. Soon after the foundation of the *Morning Herald* Bate inherited some property conditionally upon his adoption of the name of Dudley, and as Bate-Dudley henceforth he was known. But for the sake of avoiding the possibility of confusion I have thought it best to refer to him always by his original name, and in the pages

of this book he is mentioned throughout as Bate. He maintained during his life the reputation for courage and daring gained in his youth, and as a magistrate was perhaps unequalled for his enterprise and determination. Highwaymen and malefactors of other kinds did not flourish in the portions of Essex administered by the Reverend Henry Bate, who did not scruple on occasion to hunt down offenders in person and arrest them with his own strong hands. Angelo, in his memoirs, tells us how this remarkable cleric on one occasion broke in upon a gathering of armed poachers, and by forcibly depriving the ringleader of his gun cowed the remainder of the party.

Another glimpse of him in the performance of the active duties of a magistrate is given in a newspaper paragraph of May 1802, when he was in his fifty-seventh year:

"On Saturday morning was brought in a Post Chaise from Northampton and safely lodged in Chelmsford Gaol (by the Rev. H. Bate-Dudley, attended by Mr. Purnell, the Keeper thereof) Stephen Lee, the last surviving freebooter of a gang of gipsies, who on the 21st of December 1795 forcibly entered the dwelling-house of Farmer Grout, near Bishops Stortford."

In 1813 a baronetcy was conferred on Bate by the Prince Regent, and three years later, when he had passed his seventieth birthday, a riot at Ely, which was really a battle in miniature, gave him another chance of earning distinction. For his services in this affray he was presented by the Lord-Lieutenant and magistrates of the county with a silver vase modelled on an antique brought from Rome by Sir William Hamilton. He died in 1824 at Cheltenham, the town in which he had engaged Mrs. Siddons for Garrick nearly half a century before. His widow, the sister of Mrs. Hartley, and "one of the most amiable ladies in existence," survived him for several

years. He was the patron not only of Gainsborough but of George Morland, whose picture, *The Inside of a Stable*, one of the finest works of that gifted but dissipated artist, he purchased when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy of 1791. Although there appears to be no record of any acquaintanceship between the two painters befriended by Bate there is reason to think that Gainsborough and Morland may have collaborated in one instance. Robins the auctioneer sold in 1805, "A charming Landscape with Cottage by Gainsborough. The Figures and Cattle by Morland, being the *only* joint production of these two unrivalled Masters." Bate's nephew, Mr. T. Birch Wolfe, presented *The Inside of a Stable* to the National Gallery in 1877, and in the following year added to his gift the fine portrait of Bate by Gainsborough, which now hangs in Room XV at Trafalgar Square.

To Sir Henry Bate-Dudley, as Bate is known in history, we owe more information about Gainsborough than has come down to us through any other person or persons; but the existence of this information has hitherto been unsuspected, as it was hidden in forgotten newspapers. Sir Henry's notes, fortunately, deal principally with Gainsborough's professional life in London. The later years of that life, although in some respects the most interesting and productive portions of his career, are barely mentioned in any of the previous biographies because their writers were practically destitute of material. Gainsborough's acquaintances, Thicknesse and Jackson, tell us nothing about this time, but Bate's record in the *Morning Herald* is fairly constant and intimate, and occasionally extremely full. All that he has to say about the great artist to whom he was so deeply attached will be found in the following chapters.

CHAPTER VIII

LONDON, 1777–1779

Painting at Bath again—"Daubing away"—Negotiations with the Academy—Gainsborough exhibits once more—His pictures welcomed—A comparison with Sir Joshua—The Duke of Cumberland—Pictures badly hung—The portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Graham—More highwaymen—Death of Mrs. Graham—An inconsolable husband—The famous portrait hidden for fifty years—John Astley and Schomberg House—The Academy of 1778—No portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire—Walpole mistaken?—"Her Grace is too hard for me"—New light on the Devonshire legend—Gainsborough the painter of the demi-monde—"Dolly the Tall"—Reproached for want of finish—Defended by Bate—Gainsborough the Apollo of the Academy—*The Sisters Ramus.*

GAINSBOROUGH was back again in Bath in the spring of 1777, as we know by a letter written from that city on March 21st, and addressed by him to the Hon. Thomas Stratford, second son of Lord Baltinglass, afterwards Earl of Aldborough. He describes himself as "daubing away for the Exhibition" with all his might, and says that he has painted three portraits; as well as two large landscapes, "the best I ever did, and probably will be the best I shall ever live to do." Gainsborough promises Mr. Thomas Stratford that he will touch up certain works for him when he comes to town, but says that at the moment his hands are full, as the pictures for the Exhibition must be packed up and despatched in the course of the following week. Why he should have worked with such energy in 1777 for the Exhibition that he had neglected during the four preceding years is a question which cannot now be answered, but it may have been connected with some negotiations with the Royal Academy of which I shall speak presently. Gainsborough, who appears to have visited Bath to

execute some commissions, had the good fortune to meet there his friend Henderson the actor, of whom he painted another portrait, perhaps the one presented to Ireland. "I hope too that Gainsborough will let you have my head," wrote Henderson from Bath to Ireland in London. "Don't you think it's a very fine likeness?"

Judging by the minutes of the Council of the Royal Academy in March and April 1777 Gainsborough appears to have desired some privilege, or to have attempted to make conditions, before sending his pictures to the Exhibition in which he had been unrepresented since 1772. In the minutes of the Council meeting of March 25, 1777, I found the following: "Read, a letter from Thomas Gainsborough, Esq. Mr. N. Dance having offered, Resolved that Mr. Dance be desired to wait on Mr. Gainsborough and explain to him the reason why his request cannot be complied with." Nathaniel Dance, it will be remembered, was the painter who with Gainsborough had refused to send any pictures to the Academy of 1773. A letter was sent to the Council by Gainsborough on the 31st of March, and on the 13th of April there is another entry in the minutes. "Read Mr. Gainsborough's request. Resolved that it be left to the Committee to do as they think proper." The Committee referred to was the Hanging Committee, and it may be that they agreed to grant Gainsborough's request, whatever it was, in order to secure again for the Exhibition the work of so brilliant an artist. Gainsborough in any case returned to the Academy. By the press and by the public at large his reception was most flattering, but the acclamation only served to mark still more strongly the rivalry between himself and Sir Joshua Reynolds, who contributed thirteen canvases to the Academy of 1777.

The pictures sent by Gainsborough from his studio in Pall Mall included full-length portraits of the Duke

and Duchess of Cumberland; of Abel, the musician who was one of the party attacked by highwaymen two years earlier; of Lord Gage, and of a lady of whom I shall speak again. In addition to these he showed a portrait group of two gentlemen whom no one has identified and of whom the critics of the day say nothing, and a landscape which moved Walpole to extravagant praise. With one exception the critics were all attracted by the artist's work. The dissonant note was sounded by the *Gazetteer*, whose representative declared that "were it not for Sir Joshua and Mr. Loutherbourg the present Exhibition would be the meanest collection of pictures ever seen in this metropolis." But the more influential journals welcomed the return of the famous painter, who had been absent all too long. "We are glad," said the *Public Advertiser*, "to see Mr. Gainsborough once more submitting his work to public inspection, which cannot fail to add to the entertainment of the town as well as to the reputation and emolument of the artist. 'Tis hard to say in which branch of the art Mr. Gainsborough most excels, landscape or portrait painting. Let the connoisseurs carefully examine the portrait of Mr. Abel, No. 135, or the large landscape, No. 136, and then determine—if they can!"

The inevitable comparison with Reynolds was made by the *Morning Chronicle*, which, after stating that the exhibition is enriched by the paintings of Gainsborough, an artist who is a most valuable acquisition to any Society that holds exhibitions, goes on to say that his portraiture places him on a level with those who have no superiors in England but Sir Joshua Reynolds, and that he treads so close on the heels of the chief of that science that it is not always evident that Sir Joshua has the best of it. "Mr. Gainsborough, as a landscape painter, is one of the first living—as a portrait painter he is a formidable competitor with the ablest." But the critic draws attention again to that tendency towards purple in the flesh tints,

for which the artist had been reproved in earlier years, and expresses the opinion that his portrait of the Duke of Cumberland is somewhat inferior to the one painted by the President. Sir Joshua's portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland had been exhibited four years earlier, at the Academy of 1773.

The Duke of Cumberland, whose portrait Gainsborough showed in 1777, together with that of the Duchess—the fascinating Mrs. Horton—was a brother of the King. He was a dull, stupid man, and his intrigue a few years earlier with Lady Grosvenor had filled the country with scandalous gossip and compelled the ducal co-respondent to pay ten thousand pounds as damages to Sir Richard Grosvenor. His sittings must have amused and at the same time annoyed the witty Gainsborough, who seems to have been more successful than Sir Joshua in managing the Duke, as both he and his wife were painted again in the studio at Schomberg House. We know how awkwardly the Duke behaved at Leicester Square when the President was painting the Duchess. He had passed some time stumbling over easels and chairs, and swearing and making himself generally objectionable when his wife hinted that he ought to speak to Sir Joshua. "Say something," she whispered, "say something," and the Duke, thus spurred into politeness, glanced at the canvas upon which his wife's face was already sketched in, and stammered out, "What, eh! so you always begin with the head, do you?"

It is in his notice in the *Morning Post* of the Academy Exhibition of 1777 that Bate speaks for the first time of the artist of whom he was to be henceforth the most consistent and powerful supporter. His first review of Gainsborough was characteristic of those that were to follow in succeeding years in the columns of the *Morning Post* and the *Morning Herald*. Ignoring Reynolds for the time, he heads his opening notice of the Academy in large capitals, "Thomas Gainsborough, R.A." and

announces that "As the pencil of this gentleman has evidently entitled him to this distinction we have impartially placed him at the head of the artists we are about to review." The notice, with the titles of the pictures displayed in a manner calculated at once to attract the eye, praises the Cumberlands, says that Abel's is the finest modern portrait the writer remembers to have seen, and describes Gainsborough's landscape as a masterpiece, "but view'd to every possible disadvantage from the situation in which the directors have thought proper to place it."

This point of bad hanging is one upon which Bate harps in almost all his notices of Gainsborough at the Academy, and it is impossible to help thinking that the comments must have been inspired sometimes by the artist himself. The desire to have his work well placed in an exhibition is common to every painter, but Gainsborough appears to have been exceptionally fastidious, and perhaps a little selfish, in this matter. Although he was at times unfairly treated, it is not likely that all the complaints regarding the positions allotted to his canvases were justified. In fact, one correspondent, signing himself "A Delletante," writes to the *Morning Post* about the very picture of Gainsborough's which Bate mentions as unfairly placed, and says that so large a landscape never ought to have been placed upon the line at all. He complains, too, that all the good positions in the Exhibition are monopolised by Reynolds, Gainsborough, West, and one or two others. Gainsborough's landscape, which Walpole thought looked so fine despite its alleged bad position on the walls, has not, I think, been identified, but its composition included "lucid water," a broken bank, and a red cow.

Bate's first criticism of Gainsborough, although extremely eulogistic, is not remarkable except for one thing. I have already pointed out that Gainsborough's contributions to the Academy of this year included a full-

length *Portrait of a Lady*, No. 133. This portrait has been identified by no one, not even by the indefatigable Mr. Algernon Graves.

The notice in the *Morning Post* of 1777 makes it clear beyond dispute that the *Portrait of a Lady*, No. 133, was none other than the superb full-length of the Hon. Mrs. Graham, the portrait that is one of the glories of the National Gallery at Edinburgh, from whence it may never be removed upon any condition. It is described by Bate as "A beautiful whole-length of Mrs. Graham, sister to the Duchess of Atholl, the drawing of which is correct and masterly, the colouring soft, and the drapery flowing and easy." The editor of the *Morning Post* was not the only person who noticed and admired the treatment of the lady's robes in this portrait. A correspondent of the *London Chronicle* holds the picture up as an example, and says that Gainsborough is superior to all his fellows as a painter of drapery; which, as we know, was executed by his own hands and not by those of assistants. The critic of the *Morning Chronicle* was charmed with the portrait of Mrs. Graham, and ranked it even above that of Abel. He could not, however, identify the original, nor could a writer in the *General Advertiser*, whose admiration for Gainsborough's anonymous sitter knew no bounds. "Portrait of a lady," he said, "rather of a divinity! From the sweetness of the face, and the elegance of the figure the spectator is tempted to exclaim with Otway:

> 'There's in you all that we believe of Heaven;
> Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
> Eternal joy, and everlasting love.'"

This portrait, which some regard as the painter's masterpiece, and is famous alike for its artistic qualities and the romantic story connected with it, represents Mary, second daughter of the ninth Lord Cathcart. She became the wife, when only seventeen, of Thomas

THE HON. MRS. GRAHAM

National Gallery of Scotland

Graham of Balgowan, afterwards Lord Lynedoch. The wedding was on the 26th of December 1774, and on the same day the bride's elder sister was married to the Duke of Atholl. There is a tradition that Mrs. Graham's portrait was painted during her honeymoon, and this may have been the case, as according to *The Scots Magazine* the sisters were married in London, and it is known that they spent some time in town not long after the wedding. While in London at this time Graham had an opportunity of displaying that determined courage of which there were so many conspicuous examples in his military career. He was escorting his beautiful young wife and her sister the Duchess to a party in Grosvenor Square, when, in Park Lane, two footpads seized the horses' heads while a third, pistol in hand, opened the coach door and demanded the money and jewels of the company. Unfortunately for the thieves Thomas Graham was one of the last persons in the world to be robbed unresistingly. When the door was opened he was sitting in the far side of the coach, but he sprang instantly across the two ladies, was on the man before he could fire his pistol, and fell into the road with the footpad beneath him. The men who had stopped the horses ran away, the one on the ground was handed over to the watch, and Graham and his charges went on to Grosvenor Square, where it is said that he was obliged to keep as much as possible behind the skirts of his wife and her sister to conceal his muddy shoes and stockings. I am indebted for most of these particulars to Lord Lynedoch's biographers, Mr. John Murray Graham and Colonel Delavoye, who describe Mrs. Graham as not only elegant and accomplished but very attentive to her household duties, and with a charm of manner that appealed to all who approached her. She was adored by her husband, who was her constant companion till the day of her death.

They were ideally happy until, in 1791, Mrs. Graham's

health showed signs of failing. The climate—whether of Scotland or England—was too harsh for her, and after a visit to the Bristol Hot-Wells had been tried in vain her husband took her as a last hope to the south of France, where, in spite of the tenderest care, she died on ship-board off Hyères, in July 1792. Graham brought her body home, but the agonies and indignities endured upon the journey intensified the grief that ultimately almost deprived him of his reason. Immediately after his wife's death he wrote home to Scotland that he should travel by canal to Toulouse and thence down the Garonne to Bordeaux, and he carried out his intention. But France was then in the throes of revolution, and at Toulouse he was stopped by a drunken mob of municipal guards and volunteers, who refused to let the coffin pass until they had assured themselves that it contained nothing contraband. And the husband, already frantic with despair, saw the coffin torn open and his wife's body exposed.

For some time after his return to England Graham could do nothing. The associations of his Scottish seat at Balgowan were too painful to be endured. Nor could he for the same reason live in Leicestershire, where at Brooksby he had a house in which he and his wife had spent many happy days. "He wandered aimlessly about the country," says Colonel Delavoye, "burdened by a sorrow that he could not overcome."

At last he made up his mind to seek forgetfulness amid the risk and danger of active service. England was at this time at war with France, and Graham, beginning military life as a volunteer at the age of forty-four, fought bravely everywhere. He was at Toulon when Bonaparte drove out the English; was aide-de-camp to Sir John Moore when that fine soldier made his last stand at Corunna; and later, as one of Wellington's generals, was in command of the army that defeated Victor at Barossa. Graham's military prowess brought

him well-deserved honours, and he died a Peer and a General in the British army. Lord Lynedoch, as he is known to-day, lived until he was ninety-five, but in all the years that elapsed between his wife's death and his own he could never bear to look at the portrait by Gainsborough. The portrait had been lost to sight for more than half a century when the old soldier died in 1843, and no one knew what had become of it. Graham had sent it, before he volunteered for active service, to a warehouse in London. There the portrait had remained packed in a case and stored away "in the back room of a shop," whose proprietor, on hearing of the death of Lord Lynedoch, communicated with his heir. Since 1859 the portrait of Mrs. Graham has been in the National Gallery of Scotland, to which it was bequeathed by Mr. Robert Graham of Redgorton.

In the same year, 1777, in which he exhibited the portrait of Mrs. Graham at the Royal Academy, Gainsborough lost his neighbour, John Astley the painter, and the landlord of Schomberg House, of which he occupied the central portion. Astley who like most of the artists of that day, was something of a collector, disposed before leaving the house of what the auctioneers described as the "noble, superb and truly capital pictures" by Italian, French and Flemish masters which he had gathered together. He also gave notice in a grandiloquent advertisement of his wish to let the "capital and elegant mansion, situated in the most eligible part of Pall Mall. St. James's Park, with the noble objects in its environs, the prospect enriched and bounded by the Surrey Hills, seem appendages to the above premises." In the last paragraph of his advertisement Astley was referring to the view obtainable from the "attic story" already mentioned, which he himself had added to the central portion of Schomberg House. The "attic story," with its ancient lead-covered dome and its great window with semi-circular top looking south, remains much as it

was ; and the view, of which Astley might well boast, is still enchanting. Schomberg House, as I have explained in a previous chapter, is used by part of the War Office staff, and the apartment on the roof is the sitting-room of the fortunate caretaker of the building, who from his fireside can see the towers of Westminster rising above the rich foliage of the trees in St. James's Park and the gardens of Marlborough House, and the Crystal Palace breaking the long line of the Surrey hills that bound the horizon.

In 1778 the name of the Duchess of Devonshire is for the first time connected with that of Gainsborough by the modern biographers of the painter. Fulcher asserts that a portrait of the Duchess was exhibited at the Academy in this year, and his statement, which is based on that of Horace Walpole, has been accepted by most of the writers who have followed him. Walpole, in his Academy Catalogue of 1778, has written in ink against one of the Gainsboroughs, No. 111, *Portrait of a Lady*, the note, " Duchess of Devonshire ; very bad and washy," and this appears to be the only evidence that a portrait of the Duchess was exhibited. At first sight Walpole's note seems incontrovertible, as he knew the Duchess and could not have mistaken her portrait, but contemporary descriptions of the Exhibition point to the conclusion that his statement is inaccurate.

Gainsborough, after obtaining two separate extensions of time from the Academy Council, sent to the Exhibition of 1778 two landscapes and eleven portraits. Of these portraits the first entered in the catalogue is No. 111, which Fulcher, after reading Walpole's note, naturally concluded to be that of the Duchess of Devonshire. But it so happens that in 1778 the newspaper comments and criticisms on the Academy Exhibition were exceptionally numerous and lengthy, and great attention was given by the journalists of the time to Gainsborough's pictures in particular. Some of his portraits are described, and the

originals named, but there is not the remotest suggestion anywhere that the Duchess figured among his sitters.

The Duchess of Devonshire, in 1778, was in the first freshness of that remarkable beauty which was the theme of admiration not only in London, but in every part of the kingdom. The wife of a nobleman of the highest rank and great wealth, she occupied a position in society to which our times shows no parallel outside the circle of Royalty, and it is incredible that a full-length portrait of this great lady, painted by an artist whose achievements everyone was discussing, could have escaped the notice of the journalists who described the Exhibition at the Royal Academy. Least of all could it have escaped the attention of Bate, who wrote in the *Morning Post* a special article on Gainsborough's pictures, with their titles displayed at the head of the column. For Bate himself was a worshipper at the shrine of the Duchess, and when, not long afterwards, he founded the *Morning Herald*, he printed in the first number an ode in which she was hailed as the most distinguished beauty of the time. There is another reason for thinking that Gainsborough painted no portrait of her Grace as early as 1778, except, of course, the study that he made when she was a child. In 1782, more than four years after the opening of the Exhibition about which I am writing, Bate published in the *Morning Herald* some lines addressed to "Mr. Gainsborough." They were written after seeing a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire as Cynthia, shown by Mrs. Cosway at the Academy of 1782, and suggest that the Duchess had not then been painted by Gainsborough, who is urged by the poet to seek in her a subject worthy of his brush:

> "O Gainsboro'! thou whose genius soars so high,
> Wild as an eagle in an unknown sky,
> To Devon turn!—thy pencil there shall find,
> A subject equal to thy happy mind!
> Amidst thy fairest scenes, thy brightest dyes,
> Like young Aurora let the Beauty rise!"

A newspaper criticism of the Academy of 1783, to which I shall refer in due course, strengthens still further the case against Walpole, whose mistake, if it be one, is inexplicable except on the ground that the entries so carefully written in ink in his catalogues were occasionally made long after the dates of the exhibitions to which they refer. That entries were sometimes so made can be proved from the catalogues themselves, and as the Duchess of Devonshire was painted by many artists, it would have been easy for Walpole to make a slip. In the case of the particular entry of 1778 now under discussion he has written "Ds. Devon" in faint pencil on the left side of the entry No. 111, *Portrait of a Lady*, and on the right the inscription in ink which I have already given.

Fulcher, writing in 1856 about the portrait which he supposed was exhibited in 1778, tacks on to his narrative a romantic quotation from Allan Cunningham, written in 1829:

"The dazzling beauty of the Duchess and the sense which he (Gainsborough) entertained of the charms of her looks and conversation took away that readiness of hand and hasty happiness of touch which belonged to him in his ordinary moments. The picture was so little to his satisfaction that he refused to send it to Chatsworth. Drawing his wet pencil across a mouth which all who saw it thought exquisitely lovely, he said, 'Her Grace is too hard for me.' The picture was, I believe, destroyed."

In this instance, as in that of the *Tom Peartree*, it is instructive to trace the development of a Gainsborough legend which has been repeated by writer after writer until everybody believes it to be true. Fulcher attaches the anecdote to the Academy Exhibition of 1778, but Cunningham, to do him justice, did not attribute it to 1778 or any other year. He knew, in fact, nothing about it, for he had simply borrowed the anecdote without

acknowledgment from our old friend Thicknesse, adding some embroidery of his own about Chatsworth and the exquisite loveliness of the Duchess's mouth.

Thicknesse told the story in the first place in an article composed of gossip about Gainsborough which appeared in the *St. James's Chronicle* a few days after the painter's death in 1788.

"When," he said, "a certain Duchess not remarkable for want of beauty, sent to know why her picture was not sent home, though it was nearly finished and exquisitely painted at full length, Gainsborough took his background brush, made her Grace's portrait *blush brown*, and sent her word that her Grace's face was too hard for him, and this was done at a time when a hundred guineas would not have been inconvenient to him."

The article in the *St. James's Chronicle* did not escape the eye of Gainsborough's faithful friend and champion, who ridiculed the story of the Duchess. Bate, at the time the article was published, had been for many years in close touch with Gainsborough, always deeply interested in watching the progress of his pictures and constantly writing about them. He replied to Thicknesse at once, and in a note in the *Morning Herald* gave a point-blank contradiction to all his stories about Gainsborough.

"A writer in a very respectable paper of Saturday has detailed what he calls *Anecdotes of Mr. Gainsborough.* We deny the authenticity of every part except that which relates to the wife of the author and himself, and of that we know nothing. Mr. Gainsborough never obliterated any part of the Duchess of Devonshire's portrait, if the allusion be at her Grace, which we judge it is. The remark which the writer gives to Mr. Gainsborough is too stupid ever to have passed his lips."

Bate's comments upon the other anecdotes by Thicknesse are illuminating, but these belong to a different

period of Gainsborough's history, and will be referred to in their proper place.

It is clear from the newspaper comments on the Academy of 1778 that most of the ladies whose portraits were exhibited by Gainsborough were not exactly of the first rank in society — certainly not Duchesses. The *Morning Chronicle* says in its review of the exhibition :

" Mr. Gainsborough has thirteen pieces, eleven portraits and two landscapes. It should appear from this artist's female portraits that he is a favourite among the demi-reps. He has, it is plain, been visited by Miss Dalrymple, Clara Haywood, and another well-known character of the same stamp. The likenesses in the three pictures are remarkably strong, and as the real faces of the ladies we have mentioned have not been seen by the world for many a year, they were very fit subjects for Mr. Gainsborough's pencil, since he is rather apt to put that sort of complexion upon the countenances of his female portraits which is laughingly described in *The School for Scandal* as ' coming in the morning and going away at night,' than to blend what is, properly speaking, Nature's own red and white."

Equally pointed is Bate's comment on the ladies painted by his friend. " The portraits which he has exhibited on this occasion consist chiefly of *filles de joie*, and are all admirable likenesses, No. 114 particularly being that of the beautiful Mrs. E." The " beautiful Mrs. E." was Mrs. Elliott, one of the most notorious demi-mondaines of the time, known everywhere, and satirised constantly in contemporary journals, as " Dolly the Tall." Born Grace Dalrymple, she was the daughter of a member of a reputable Scottish family. She was married when very young to a physician afterwards well known as Sir John Elliott, from whom she was divorced. Mrs. Elliott was frequently referred to as Miss Dalrymple. The *Morning Chronicle* mentions her thus ; and the

General Evening Post in its notice of the Academy of this year describes No. 114 as:

"A striking and beautiful portrait of an unfortunate lady (Miss Da—ple) of whom we may say with Pope:

> 'If to her share some female errors fall
> Look on her face and you'll forget them all.'

The carnations in this portrait appear with inexpressible delicacy, united with the utmost force and truth; and the touch of the artist is uncommonly exquisite. The blue tint, however, is too predominant in the hair, but we surely ought to forgive this seeming imperfection from the inexpressible sensibility that animates the whole figure."

Miss Dalrymple, whose adventures in Paris during the Reign of Terror are described in her *Journal of my Life during the French Revolution*, was the aunt of Frances, Lady Shelley, as that lady records in a singular passage in her *Diary*. Writing of her girlhood, she says:

"One day, it must have been in 1803, I came back unexpectedly to my mother's sick room and saw, sitting at her bedside, the most beautiful woman I had ever beheld. She was dressed in the indecent style of the French Republican period. Tears were rolling down her cheeks; this heightened her beauty without defacing the rouge which had been artistically applied. When she saw me she rose to her feet, rushed towards me, and cried impulsively, 'Do let me kiss my darling niece.' . . . This was the first and only time I saw my mother's unhappy sister, Grace Dalrymple Elliott. Of course, I knew nothing *then* of my aunt's history, and could not understand why my poor mother burst into tears and afterwards regretted this accidental *rencontre*. Georgiana Seymour, whom I met at Houghton, was her daughter, presumably by Lord Cholmondeley. But the Prince of Wales also claimed to be her father; and in those profligate days the mother was treated semi-Royal by those who wished to flatter his Royal Highness. . . . All the men of *ton* and many women received and courted the mother."

Grace Dalrymple's daughter, who according to Lady Shelley was brought up at Houghton with Lady Cholmondeley's children, married Lord Charles Bentinck, son of the third Duke of Portland, and a fine portrait of Dolly the Tall, by Gainsborough, is now in the Duke of Portland's collection at Welbeck. As will be seen, she sat again to Gainsborough in 1782, and perhaps a third time (as Madame St. Alban) in 1785.

The writer in the *General Evening Post* who shows his admiration so strongly for the fair but erring Dolly, notices Gainsborough's peculiar talent for giving elegance and grace to his figures, and he comments, as the other critics do, upon the exact resemblance to the original seen in the portrait of Mr. Christie, which was one of those exhibited this year. The *Morning Chronicle* declares the likeness to be so good that the printing of the auctioneer's name in the catalogue was superfluous. This journal, however, was less flattering to Lord Chesterfield, the successor in the title to the author of the famous *Letters*, and the prosecutor of Dr. Dodd. Referring to the portrait of Lord Chesterfield in the Exhibition of 1778, the *Morning Chronicle* points out that the painter has so happily caught his Lordship's character that the countenance of the portrait has in it all the insensibility and want of meaning for which the original is remarkable! The same critic complains that in spite of their other excellencies most of Gainsborough's portraits at the Academy look as if the drapery and the subordinate parts were unfinished, that the hands in some of them are unsubstantial and informal, and that he seems to have taken pains only with the heads of his figures. "Perhaps," adds the writer mischievously, "he found that Nature had done less for those parts than for any other, and therefore gave them as much assistance as lay within the compass of his art."

Two days afterwards the challenge about the "unfinished parts" was taken up by Bate in the *Morning*

Post. "Gainsborough has been reproached with negligence in finishing. If his pieces be view'd at a proper distance, which as it is manifestly his design is the only just way of estimating their merit, this imputation will appear totally without foundation." In the same notice Bate proclaims Gainsborough as the Apollo of the Royal Academy; not excelled even by Sir Joshua Reynolds in his portraits, "and the competitor of Rubens in his landscapes." One of Gainsborough's landscapes (119) shown at the Academy of 1778, and described as "beautiful to excess" was inspired by the passage from Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* descriptive of the release of the children at midday, and commencing:

> "But now Dan Phœbus gains the middle sky,
> And liberty unbars her prison door;
> And like a rushing torrent out they fly,
> And now the grassy cirque have covered o'er
> With boisterous revel, rout and wild uproar."

The portraits identified by Mr. Graves at the Academy of 1778 are: No. 111, the Duchess of Devonshire; Nos. 112 and 113, Lord and Lady Chesterfield; No. 114, Mrs. Elliott; No. 115, Miss Dalrymple; No. 116, Clara Haywood; No. 408, De Loutherbourg the painter; and Nos. 407 and 409, Mr. and Mrs. Minet. For reasons already given it is extremely unlikely that a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire was exhibited this year, and the attribution of No. 115 to Miss Dalrymple seems doubtful, unless Gainsborough painted two ladies of that name. Otherwise, according to two contemporary writers, Miss Dalrymple and Mrs. Elliott are one and the same person, who figures in the full-length, No. 114. A bust portrait of Mrs. Wise, shown at the National Loan Exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, 1913–1914, was described in the catalogue as exhibited by Gainsborough at the Academy of 1778.

In the following year of 1779 Gainsborough and Bate lost their common friend David Garrick, who was buried in February, with great state, in Westminster Abbey.

Bate was one of those invited to follow the actor to his last resting-place, but I have been unable to find Gainsborough's name in any list of those present at the interment. The *Morning Post* contains this year no eulogies of Gainsborough's pictures at the Academy. Nor did Bate renew them in his former manner until two years afterwards, when he was able to write with a free hand in his own journal, the *Morning Herald*. In fact, no Academy criticisms of any kind are to be found in the *Morning Post* of 1779, in which year, when the Exhibition opened, public interest was centred almost entirely in the court-martial on Admiral Palliser. To the reports of this trial a large portion of the space devoted to news was given day after day, and although a notice of the Royal Academy was promised "in a future paper" I have not been able to trace it. However, there were indications of a change in the tendencies of the art criticism, although Bate was still nominally editor of the paper. The preliminary announcement of the promised review of the Royal Academy, which never appeared, stated that it would commence with a description of the work of "that immortal artist, Sir Joshua Reynolds," but made no mention of Gainsborough. Everything seems to indicate that Bate's power on the *Morning Post* had lessened, and that the quarrels among the proprietors had commenced which were to lead to the secession of the editor and the foundation of the *Morning Herald* by him in the autumn of the following year.

Other journals noticed Gainsborough's pictures at the Academy in 1779, and in most cases favourably, but some critics found fault with his portraits once more for the alleged artificiality of their colouring. The *St. James's Chronicle* was both pleased and displeased with his work. The writer of the review in this paper, while admitting that it is the fashion to admire the richness and embroidery of Mr. Gainsborough's landscapes, says that the one shown is not to his taste; and he also finds fault

with the expression of the face in the portrait of the Duchess of Gloucester (Countess Waldegrave), whose marriage to the King's brother was now acknowledged. He thinks the portrait finely drawn and a striking likeness, but feels that Mr. Gainsborough is less happy in his attitudes than Sir Joshua. The Duchess had been seen so much in public that the artist should have been very attentive to the expression of her countenance, which is never that of contemplation, but always of a placid good-nature. The same critic speaks of No. 101, *Two Ladies Half Length*, as one of the most engaging pictures he has ever seen. The ladies, he says, are elegant and beautiful brunettes; they are sisters, and express in the most natural manner that kind of affection that should subsist between them. This portrait of *Two Ladies Half Length* has never been identified, but the description in the *St. James's Chronicle* suggests that it was probably the famous group of *The Sisters Ramus*, shown in the Old Masters Exhibition of 1875 as *The Two Sisters*, and for many years in the Graham collection. It was sold at Christie's in 1887 for £9975—a very large price for that time—and was acquired by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild. Three years later it was burnt in the fire at Waddesdon Manor.

Gainsborough also exhibited at the Academy of 1779 portraits of the Duke of Argyll, the Duchess of Cumberland and Baron Perryn.

That Gainsborough visited Bath again in the summer of 1779 is shown by a letter quoted in the catalogue of a loan exhibition held in 1903 at the Birmingham Corporation Art Gallery. The letter was quoted in connection with the exhibited portrait of Mr. Philip Ditcher, a Bath surgeon to whom Gainsborough considered himself indebted for services to his family. It is addressed to Mrs. Ditcher:

"MADAM,—I am very glad the picture arrived safe and meets with your approbation. With regard to the

price of the picture and frame I must acknowledge myself overpaid abundantly by my worthy friend's attention to my family while we lived at Bath, and which I shall ever remember with gratitude. If you can, pardon my neglect in not paying the carriage, which I fully intended doing but for the hurry I was in the day it went away. You may rest assured, Madam, that what remains unpaid is from us to you. My family join in best respects. And I remain, your most obedient servant,

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

"BATH, *July* 31, 1779.

"MRS. DITCHER,
"LANSDOWN ROAD, BATH."

Gainsborough, it will be observed, writes to say that he is glad the portrait arrived safely and apologises for not paying the carriage, but as he and Mrs. Ditcher were both at Bath it is curious that there should be any carriage to pay. It may be that the portrait was painted in London and forwarded by carrier to Bath before the artist himself set out. Mrs. Ditcher, to whom Gainsborough's graceful note was addressed, was a daughter of Samuel Richardson the novelist. She was very intimate with Gainsborough's friends the Sheridans, and R. B. Sheridan's sister was named Anne after her. Mrs. Ditcher's daughter was one of the reigning toasts of Bath a few years afterwards, and it is to her that Fanny Burney refers more than once as "the beautiful Miss Ditcher."

CHAPTER IX

LONDON, 1780–1781

The Royal Academy at Somerset House—Marriage of Mary Gainsborough—John Christian Fischer—A cruel practical joke—The unhappy marriage—Fischer's death—Opening of the Royal Academy in 1780—"An incredible concourse of people"—*The Candid Review*—Gossett the wax-modeller—Gainsborough exhibits a portrait of Bate—Not the National Gallery portrait—More complaints of bad hanging—Gainsborough's landscapes "beggar description"—The Academy Catalogue—Gainsborough at the Academy of 1781—"Confessedly its principal support"—Bate's rapturous appreciation severely criticised—The *London Courant* and the *Earwig*—Mauritius Lowe—The *Shepherd*—Portraits of the King and Queen—Another royal commission—The young naval hero—Gainsborough the unofficial Court painter—No backstairs influence—Why the King employed Gainsborough—A new portrait of the Prince of Wales—"Leaning on a massy sabre"—Perdita Robinson.

THE year 1780 was marked by two events of importance to Gainsborough, one of which concerned his professional and the other his private life. The first was the establishment of the Royal Academy by the King in the imposing new building known as Somerset House; and the second the marriage of Mary, the painter's younger daughter, to John Christian Fischer the musician, whose acquaintance she had made many years earlier when her father was living at Bath. Gainsborough, though he had a high opinion of Fischer's musical abilities, never liked him as a man, and always disapproved of his attentions to his daughters. I say daughters because there is reason to believe that Fischer had paid court to Margaret Gainsborough as well as to her sister Mary. Gainsborough himself thought this to be the case, and when he moved from Bath to London, did all he could to prevent either of his daughters from being in the musician's society.

" And behold," he said, in a letter of 1775 already quoted, " whilst I had my eye upon Peggy, the other slyboots, I suppose, had all along been the object."

Mary Gainsborough's marriage has been described as clandestine, but this was not the case. Her father's consent was asked, but at such a late stage that he could not refuse it without the risk of causing much unhappiness. The wedding, I have discovered, took place at St. Anne's Church, Soho, on February 21, 1780, in the presence of Gainsborough, who presumably gave his daughter away. The ceremony was performed (by licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury) by the Rev. William Hivens, described in the register as " minister," and the witnesses, in addition to Gainsborough, were his wife and his nephew, Gainsborough Dupont. There is no mention of Mary's elder sister, Margaret, who according to her father was very unhappy about the marriage, and perhaps on that account stayed at home on the morning of the 21st of February. St. Anne's was chosen for the ceremony because Soho was the parish of the bridegroom, who lived at No. 23 Frith Street.

Two days after the wedding Gainsborough wrote to Mrs. Gibbon, at Bath:

" Dear Sister,—I imagine you are by this time no stranger to the alteration which has taken place in my family. The notice I had of it was very sudden, as I had not the least suspicion of the attachment being so long and deeply settled; and as it was too late for me to alter anything without being the cause of total unhappiness on both sides, my *consent*, which was a mere compliment to affect to ask, I needs must give, whether such a match was agreeable to me or not. I would not have the cause of unhappiness lay upon my conscience, and accordingly they were married last Monday, and are settled for the present in a ready-furnished little house in Curzon Street, Mayfair.

" I can't say I have any reason to doubt the man's honesty or goodness of heart, as I never heard any one speak anything amiss of him; and as to his oddities and

JOHN CHRISTIAN FISCHER

By permission of H.M. the King

temper she must learn to like them as she likes his person, for nothing can be altered now. I pray God she may be happy with him and have her health. Peggy has been very unhappy about it, but I endeavour to comfort her, in hope that she will have more pride and goodness than to do anything without first asking my advice and approbation. We shall see how they go on, and I shall write to you further upon the subject. I hope you are all well, and with best wishes, I remain your affectionate brother,

"THOS. GAINSBOROUGH."

Gainsborough, who says in this letter that he "had not the least suspicion of the attachment being so long and deeply settled," seems to have forgotten that in 1775, more than four years earlier, he had written to his sister to say that he had discovered that Mary and Fischer were corresponding secretly.

John Christian Fischer was a performer on the oboe, of which instrument he was a master. When he first arrived in England from Germany he played at a concert at the house of the Duke of Cumberland, in whose band was an oboe-player named Simpson, at that time regarded as pre-eminent in England. Simpson listened to the performance of the new arrival, and at once declared that the German's excellence was unapproachable, and that after hearing him, he could never again venture to play a solo in public. Fischer was appointed to the Queen's band the year after his marriage, with a retaining salary of £200 a year, and Fanny Burney has recorded the impression his music left upon her mind when she heard him at Windsor in 1786. "Imagine what a charm to my ears ensued on the opening of the evening concert, when the sweet-flowing, melting, celestial notes of Fischer's hautboy reached them! It made the evening pass so soothingly I could listen to nothing else."

But the position in the Queen's band was not one of unalloyed happiness, for Fischer, shy, eccentric, and proud of his profession, deeply resented an unpleasant prac-

tical joke of which he was the victim at Windsor in the same year. Bate, who was interested in Fischer both as a musician and as the son-in-law of his friend Gainsborough, described the incident soon after it happened in one of his gossiping paragraphs in the *Morning Herald:*

"Mr. Fischer, the celebrated performer on the oboe, who is no less remarkable for the irritability of his nerves than for his skill as a musician, was lately at Windsor to assist at a concert given by their Majesties to a select party of the nobility. He was desired to play one of his concertos, which he did with great approbation, but just as he was about to conclude on one of his most elaborate cadences the young Prince Adolphus, who had found means to conceal himself below the music desk, with great dexterity whipt the oboe out of his hands, and left the astonished musician in the attitude of playing but without an instrument! The figure of Fischer was so extremely ludicrous that the whole company burst into a loud laugh, and the Royal Pair could not refrain from joining in the chorus. It was some time before they were grave enough to order the Prince to be disgraced for the evening, and poor Fischer was so much disconcerted that after recovering his hautboy he retreated with great precipitation."

The young Prince who snatched the oboe from Fischer was the father of the late Duke of Cambridge, and grandfather of Queen Mary.

Another oboe-player of the same time, Parke, who was acquainted with both Gainsborough and his son-in-law, says that Fischer had devoted himself so constantly to his musical studies that he had enjoyed very little intercourse with society, and in consequence forgot his own language without acquiring any other. Although of distinguished appearance, he seems to have been a dull man apart from his music, and an unfit companion for the handsome and accomplished Mary Gainsborough. A writer, who records the death of Mrs. Fischer, deplores the fact that Gainsborough permitted his daughter to be married to a man "devoid of prudence, and with no

more intellect than his hautboy." Parke, who described Gainsborough as a lively companion, says that when the painter was talking about the oddities of his son-in-law he mentioned walking with him one frosty day in Pall Mall. A gentleman immediately in front of them slipped on some ice and fell heavily. Fischer, startled, spluttered out, " I never did that—I never in my life made a slip." " And in a fortnight," said Gainsborough ruefully to Parke, " he married my daughter ! "

The fact that Gainsborough exhibited a whole-length portrait of his son-in-law at the Academy of 1780, only a few weeks after the marriage, shows that the two men must have been temporarily reconciled. But the truce did not last long. The married life of the Fischers, commenced in " the ready-furnished little house in Curzon Street, Mayfair," soon came to an end, and the musician and his wife lived apart for the rest of their days. It is significant that when Gainsborough, with the hand of death upon him, made his will eight years afterwards, he was careful to tie up the money left to his daughter, Mary Fischer, so that it should not be subject to " the debts, power, control, or intermeddling " of her husband. Fischer lived for more than twenty years after his marriage, but with his life during that period the biographer of Gainsborough is not concerned. He played the last of his " melting, celestial notes " in the presence of the King and Queen at a concert given at Buckingham House. Fischer was performing, and had just finished the first movement of his concerto when he had a stroke of apoplexy and fell on to the instrument—a double bass —of the musician next to him. The King was much affected, and after calling in the nearest medical aid that could be obtained, sent the sufferer home in one of the royal carriages. Fischer, who died an hour or so after reaching the house, desired in his last moments that all his manuscript music should be presented to his Majesty.

The removal of the Royal Academy to Somerset House, which I have mentioned as an important event of Gainsborough's professional life in 1780, added new dignity to the institution presided over by Sir Joshua Reynolds. The old rooms in Pall Mall, not far from Gainsborough's house, in which the pictures were shown previously, were now exchanged for galleries designed for the purpose, and forming part of a national building containing apartments for the keeper and accommodation for the schools. The press was not slow to recognise the honour bestowed upon the Academy by the King in granting the galleries. Bate praises the new rooms in the *Morning Post*, but with the praise couples a thrust at the President:

"Yesterday the exhibition of the artists at the Royal Academy was opened in the new buildings, Somerset Place, where a noble suite of rooms has been adapted for that purpose. The grand room is at the top, which receives a fine refracted light from the arched side windows above. The rooms beneath are appropriated for drawings, models, statues, busts, &c. At the end of one of them are portraits of their Majesties by Sir Joshua Reynolds, which, if it were not likely to be deemed high treason against the Prince of Painters, we should be apt to criticise pretty freely. . . . The concourse of people who attended the opening of the exhibition yesterday was incredible; the carriages filled the whole wide space from the New Church to Exeter Change. It is computed that the doorkeepers did not take less than £500 yesterday for the admission of the numerous visitants of all ranks."

Another writer, on the 17th of May, supplements Bate's account by a statement that no fewer than twenty thousand copies of the catalogue had been sold during the first fortnight of the Exhibition. These figures may be exaggerated, but the Academy records show that the receipts of the first season at Somerset House were more than double those of the best year in Pall Mall.

To Somerset House in 1780 Gainsborough sent six landscapes and ten portraits, all of which helped to increase his reputation. The identification of the portraits this year is simplified by a pamphlet, published in May 1780, *A Candid Review of the Exhibition*, in which all Gainsborough's works are described. The *Candid Review*, which appeared almost simultaneously with the opening of the Exhibition, was criticised in more than one journal on the ground that it must have been written by some one possessed of inside information concerning the new galleries at Somerset House and the pictures contained in them. This, though annoying to rival and less privileged pamphleteers, adds considerably to the value of the *Candid Review*, whose writer probably had access to the lists of names which the painters of anonymous portraits were obliged to send to the Academy with their works. A correspondent of the *Gazetteer*, in a letter attacking the author of the *Candid Review*, says: "It is plain that either you or somebody for you must have seen everything before it was open to the public, for how could you view and judge of more than four hundred performances, write a pamphlet, and publish it, all in one day?"

Gainsborough's ten portraits represented his son-in-law, Fischer ("*So* like, but so handsome," as Susan Burney wrote to her sister Fanny), General Conway, the Rev. Mr. Stevens, Mr. Crosdill, Madame le Brun, Henderson the actor, Mr. George Coyte, Mrs. Beaufoy, the Rev. Henry Bate, and the gentleman whom Walpole describes as "Mr. Fossett," and Fulcher as "the Rev. Gossett, the well-known book collector." The *Candid Review* also refers to this gentleman as Mr. Gossett, but a descriptive note that follows the name shows that Gainsborough's sitter was not the Rev. Isaac Gossett the bibliophile but his father, Isaac Gossett the modeller. The note on this portrait (No. 33) says, "A strong likeness of Mr. Gossett, and appears as much relieved as if

it was a model by the artist it represents." Isaac Gossett, the elder, was the inventor of a composition of wax in which he modelled portraits in a fashion that brought him royal and other patronage. Gainsborough, who was himself an amateur in wax modelling, appears to have known Gossett very well. The modeller was probably the Mr. Gossett whose name is to be found in the list of mourners at Gainsborough's funeral.

When noticing the Exhibition of 1780 Fulcher refers to the portrait of "the Rev. Henry Bate, editor of the *Morning Post,*" and says, "Gainsborough painted a second portrait of him, standing in a garden with his dog, a work of great beauty of design and handling." Fulcher, I think, was in error here, for what he describes as the second portrait is evidently the one exhibited in 1780—the full-length now in the collection of Lady Burton. The description in the *Candid Review* fits the Burton portrait, and there is no record of another full length of Bate. The description is as follows: "The Reverend Mr. Bate, and perhaps there never was a more perfect resemblance. The modest style of the drapery, and the genteel figure of the person, assisting the painter, he has produced a most admirable picture. The dog is very fine." Lady Burton's portrait shows Bate very quietly and unobtrusively dressed, standing in a landscape with gloves and cane in his right hand and a dog beside him. The National Gallery catalogue states that the bust portrait of Bate at Trafalgar Square was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780, but this is a mistake. Bate's reputation as a fighter is hinted at in amusing fashion by the *Candid Review* when describing Fuseli's picture of *Satan starting from the Touch of Ithuriel's Lance* which Walpole speaks of as "extravagant and ridiculous." At the Royal Academy Fuseli's canvas was flanked on one side by Gainsborough's portrait of the editor of the *Morning Post,* and on the other by a representation of a Highland officer by Copley.

" We have more reason than one," says the reviewer, " to fancy there was a little playful spark of satire in the arrangement of the pictures; it would not trust the Devil between any but the Highlander and Mr. Bate." The Highland officer painted by Copley was Major Montgomery, who had been engaged not long before in fighting the Cherokees, whose blazing wigwams were introduced into the background of the picture.

Bate speaks, of course, in appreciative terms of Gainsborough's work in the review of the Academy of 1780 that appeared in the *Morning Post*. But he does not write with the freedom and assurance which distinguish the eulogies of 1777 and 1778, and those which appeared in the *Morning Herald* in later years. His notice is brief, and he refers to no work specifically, perhaps because his own portrait was one of Gainsborough's most conspicuous canvases. He remarks how liberally the artist has contributed to the Exhibition both in portraiture and landscape, and concludes with another complaint of the injustice of the hangers:

" As there is but one opinion this season respecting Mr. Gainsborough's superior excellence in either style there can be no necessity for our pointing out any of his productions to the attention of our readers. It is to be lamented, however, that the generality of his beautiful landscapes could not have been placed in such a light and at such distance for which they were evidently painted."

No doubt in making this protest Bate had particularly in his mind the sunny picture in which a shepherd and his flock were the principal features. This work, described by the *London Courant*, as " a most enchanting landscape by Gainsborough, touched with infinite spirit and grace," was placed above the doorway of the great room at Somerset House.

Gainsborough's landscapes this year, whether well or badly hung, attracted favourable opinions on all sides.

Horace Walpole, who by a special invitation of the Academy Council was admitted to the new galleries before they were thrown open to the public, praises the six landscapes in terms of the extremest eulogy. According to the *Morning Chronicle*, they "beggar description," and another writer describes as "incomparable indeed" the picture No. 197, in which the artist has introduced horses and cattle. It is difficult to identify Gainsborough's exhibited pictures of this class, as he always describes them in the catalogue as "A Landscape," or "Landscape," but one of those in the Academy of 1780 was certainly the work afterwards engraved with some lines from Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* inscribed beneath the print. This picture in its entirety has disappeared, but Lord Ronald Gower owned a portion of it which showed the figures of a man and a woman spelling out the name on an old tomb in a churchyard. In the Academy Catalogue of 1780 it is No. 319, *Landscape*, and a contemporary journal describes it as a picture "of peasants viewing inscriptions on a tombstone amidst the ruins of a religious building, well calculated to captivate the heart." A description of No. 62, *Landscape*, suggests that it may have been the *Cottage Door*, now in the Duke of Westminster's collection. "This beautiful scene where serenity and pleasure dwell in every spot, and the lovely figures composed in the finest rural style, their situation worthy of them, forms a scene of happiness that may truly be called Adam's paradise." Another writer says of this landscape that its centre of interest is "a beautiful group of children and their mother."

The removal of the Royal Academy to Somerset House in 1780 was accompanied by an attempt to reform the catalogue of the Exhibition, which hitherto had been both defective and inconvenient. This was in part owing to the fact that many artists (not necessarily members) were allowed to send empty frames on the days fixed for delivering works; keeping back and working upon

the canvases themselves until the last moment. In such conditions it was impossible to compile the lists of works properly before the opening of the Exhibition, and many of the earlier catalogues contain an additional page or so of "omitted" pictures. In 1778 three of Gainsborough's works were in the "omitted" list, and Fulcher, who has overlooked the supplementary pages, does not include these pictures among the exhibits of the year. The reform of 1780 was, however, rather an attempt to remodel the catalogue than to improve its accuracy.

In the catalogues of preceding years the works of each man were grouped under his name and numbered consecutively, but the pictures themselves were distributed all over the galleries. This had caused many complaints in the press from people who could not find the pictures they were in search of; and as early as 1775 a correspondent of the *Public Advertiser* had suggested the adoption of a new method.

"Many persons," he wrote, "who visit the annual exhibitions of the Royal Academy have found the mode of classing the works of the Masters in the printed catalogues very inconvenient and troublesome: being not at all conformable to the disposition of them in the room, for in the manner the catalogue has hitherto been made out, it is very difficult to find any particular performance sought for without much trouble and patience, and the blending of various and distant numbers upon the pieces which succeed each other creates a confused and disagreeable process. Now as most people pursue their view in a progressive course round the rooms from left to right it is submitted whether the exhibitions may not be rendered more convenient and agreeable by ordering the arrangement of the pieces in the room and in the catalogue to go hand in hand; that is after the pieces are properly placed in the room, then to number them progressively, beginning with numbers 1, 2, &c. at the left-hand entrance of the room and continuing the following numbers round the room as contiguous to each other as convenience will admit."

Although the correspondent of the *Public Advertiser* was not a master of the art of expression, his idea was a good one, and it was adopted in the Academy Catalogue of 1780, which was upon the whole well received by the public. However, one journal thought the new catalogue inferior to the one compiled on the original method, and a correspondent of the *Morning Post* pointed out that it was still imperfect in one important particular. He says that he has just returned from a visit to the Academy Exhibition, and while disclaiming any intention of attempting to criticise the performances he would like to say something about the catalogue. The new arrangement he finds abundantly better than the old. "But the intention of my writing to you is to suggest a very obvious and very easy improvement which would render the catalogue quite complete, as it would enable one instantly to find any picture, or all the pictures of any artist. It is, sir, only to add at the end of the alphabetical series of artists, the numbers of that artist's performances. Thus, for instance—Sir Joshua Reynolds, No. 12, 18, 32, 102, 138, 157, 167." This eminently sensible addition to the catalogue was made exactly as the writer suggested, but not immediately. The numbers were not placed after the names of the artists until 1783, when Gainsborough found to his cost that it was still possible to make mistakes in the catalogue by omitting pictures altogether.

After the brief notice of his work in the Royal Academy of 1780 nothing more about Gainsborough appeared in the *Morning Post* during Bate's editorship. This did not continue long, for it was in November of the same year that he founded the *Morning Herald*, of which, as proprietor and editor, he had absolute control. As soon as he had got over the troubles connected with his imprisonment for libels which had appeared in the *Morning Post* during his editorship of that journal, he used his power on the *Morning Herald* to further to the

fullest extent the interest of his painter-friend in Pall Mall. With the opening of the Academy Exhibition of 1781 the editor of the *Morning Herald* commenced to advocate Gainsborough in his new journal.

The time was opportune, for the artist was showing at Somerset House full-length portraits of the King and Queen; a portrait of Bishop Hurd, painted for her Majesty; three landscapes; and a picture of a country boy, *A Shepherd*, which was the first rustic figure by Gainsborough to attract attention. Bate, in his opening review in the *Morning Herald*, follows a displayed list of Gainsborough's pictures by a panegyric, in the course of which the old complaints of unfair hanging once more make their appearance. This year, however, Gainsborough was on the ground instead of above a door.

"Mr. Gainsborough," says the *Morning Herald*, "is confessedly the principal support of the present exhibition. The critic eye alternately wanders from his portraits to his landscapes and becomes too much enraptured with either to decide which are most entitled to pre-eminence. The King's is by far the most striking, and at the same time the most correct and graceful portrait ever given of him. The Queen's is the only happy likeness we ever saw pourtrayed of her Majesty; the head is not only very highly finished but expresses all that amiableness of character which so justly distinguishes her. There is a stiffness in full dress that always cruelly militates against the artist in spite of his best endeavours; this is evident in the above picture, though the drapery is charmingly pencilled and relieved. The head of the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, painted for the Queen, is finely executed; but the *Shepherd Boy* in a tempestuous scene is evidently the *chef d'œuvre* of this great artist, a composition in which the numberless beauties of design, drawing, and colouring are so admirably blended as to excite the admiration of every beholder. Mr. Gainsborough's two sea-views show the universality of his genius, for though they are his first attempts in this line the water is exquisitely painted. The landscape of cattle passing over a bridge is equally fine, but the effect

of it, like that of his other productions, is shamefully destroyed by the picture being hung almost close to the ground. Strange that the fame of an artist who is honoured with the most flattering marks of his Sovereign's favour should be sacrificed on the pitiful shrine of ignorance or jealousy."

This confident assertion of the supremacy of Gainsborough was made in a year when his great rival was unusually well represented at the Academy. Sir Joshua's pictures at the Exhibition included the group of the Ladies Waldegrave, the portrait of Lord Richard Cavendish, the *Master Bunbury*, and other fine canvases, and it was not likely that the statement in the *Morning Herald* would remain unchallenged. It was attacked two days later by the *London Courant*, in which a contributor writing above the signature "Ensis" made some remarks that were equally uncomplimentary to Bate's knowledge and judgment and to his newly founded journal.

"As now," wrote the champion of Reynolds, "every man who can escape with a shilling from the taxes may be a connoisseur, thousands will exercise their criticisms on the mute victims of Somerset House. Some of them will undoubtedly oblige the public with their remarks, and to these I take the liberty of offering some salutary advice—not to confound the classes of artists. A morning paper that struggles to erect itself into the *Herald* of renown and infamy, has sounded the first blast with the name of Gainsborough; a name however honourable in its rank, not honourable enough to head a class or to be often repeated by posterity. According to this critic Gainsborough has left behind him all who painted the Royal Pair before him. His King is grand; in his Queen he has unveiled the Graces; his Bishop is the warm truth of life; in his landscapes he has silenced nature; but beggared pathos and description in the Beggar Boy of St. James's Street. Such is his impertinent and ignorant rapture in a place that exhibits sixteen pieces by Reynolds, the least of which exceeds the power of Gainsborough as far as Johnson's that of Bate. Gainsborough is too respectable an artist not to be sensible that the

dignity of Reynolds's King, the bleak heroism of his Cavendish, the wanton frenzy of his Thais, the domestic elegance of his Waldegraves, the infant grace of his Rutlands, the simplicity of every dimpled babe that ever sprung from his hands, are in a line of art which the vaunted painter of the King and Shepherd must never hope to obtain, whilst the Dido and the Virtues shall probably remain for ever beyond the reach of his eye."

In the same issue of the *London Courant* that contains this vigorous defence of the President, appears a criticism of the Academy Exhibition written by another hand, and here Bate's complaint of the unfair hanging of Gainsborough's pictures is strongly supported. The critic, after praising the broad, bold, masterly style of No. 77, *Landscape*, says :

" His pictures can never be seen to advantage when the room is filled with company, as they are hung much too near the eye. If they were too far from the eye it might perhaps be equally bad ; but an artist of this gentleman's merit should be particularly accommodated, though inferior artists suffer by it. If his pictures hung the same height with those of Barrett's they would have a noble effect. The distance from the eye should not be in proportion to the size of the picture, but in proportion to the breadth of light and shadow and the high finishing."

With the comments of the *London Courant* on this matter it is interesting to compare those of the *Earwig*, an anonymous critical pamphlet of the exhibition of 1781. In parts the two are almost identical, and the similarity suggests that the same hand wrote both the criticisms. The *Earwig*, for example, says, " The works of this artist have always been prejudiced by being hung too near or too far from the eye. The distance should be proportioned not to the size of the picture but to the finishing, the light and the shadow." The supposed writer of the *Earwig*—and apparently of the

criticisms in the *London Courant*—was Mauritius Lowe, the earliest winner of the gold medal and travelling studentship for historical painting given by the Royal Academy. Lowe was a discreditable person in whom Dr. Johnson took a strange interest, and who owes what little distinction he has to the fact that he was one of the first teachers of Turner. So far as the *Earwig* was concerned he had good reason for wishing to preserve his anonymity, for the artists of the time were indignant at the comments contained in the pamphlet, and some of them were considering the desirability of taking legal action against the author and publisher.

The admiration expressed by Bate for Gainsborough's two sea-pieces, "his first attempts in that line," was shared by Walpole, who in a well-known passage of a letter to Mason describing the Exhibition of 1781 says, "Gainsborough has two pieces with land and sea so free and natural that one steps back for fear of being splashed." One of these must have been No. 94, of which a contemporary critic writes, "The clouds seem in motion, the waves to be retiring from the beach, and the fishing boats really float on the waves." The other sea-piece I cannot identify. Bate speaks of "the landscape with cattle passing a bridge," which may be the same picture described in another journal as having its principal light in a white cow in the centre of the canvas, and with figures well grouped. Another picture was much admired for "the native comeliness and grace of its female peasants," by a writer, who after commending Gainsborough's landscapes for their general truthfulness, adds "yet they appear when near like mere sketches, and everything is found in their effect."

The portraits of their Majesties received contemporary praise as good likenesses, the King more than the Queen; but one writer, while admitting the resemblance of both, thought that the King's face was too small, and perhaps too red. Walpole thought the King's portrait "very

like, but stiff and raw." Beattie, who saw the royal portraits in the Academy, speaks of the King's as the strongest he had ever seen; but he disapproved of the attitudes both of his Majesty and the Queen. The portrait of the Bishop was also admired, but for Gainsborough the popular success of the year was *A Shepherd*. This picture of the lad sitting on the ground with a dog by his side was universally admired, and the *Earwig* proclaimed it to be the best work at the Royal Academy.

Soon after the close of the Exhibition Gainsborough was offered, and accepted, another royal commission. Prince William Henry, afterwards William the Fourth, was at this time a young officer in the Navy, and the King, anxious to have the portrait of his sailor son painted before he joined the squadron on the American coast, sent for Gainsborough to Buckingham House. The Prince sat twice, with the result that the artist produced "so striking and characteristic a portrait of the young naval hero that all the Court connoisseurs who have seen it declare it to be one of the finest portraits they ever beheld." By the middle of July 1781 Gainsborough had attained a position akin to that of a Court painter, although he had no actual appointment.

We are told that "Gainsborough's fame is now quite established at Buckingham House. His success with the royal portraits, so applauded in the last Exhibition, is even outdone by the happy manner in which he has hit off the portrait of the Prince. So that he is now, vice Mr. Zoffanii and other predecessors, the Apollo of the Palace." The portrait of William the Fourth as a young naval officer, which made secure Gainsborough's position at Buckingham House and helped to bring him many commissions to paint other Princes and Princesses, remained in royal hands until the death of King William's nephew, the late Duke of Cambridge. It was sold at Christie's, with the pictures belonging to the Duke, soon after his death in 1904. Acquired by Messrs. Knoedler

of New Bond Street, the portrait was sent to America and exhibited at the firm's New York gallery. From thence it was sold to Mr. John F. Talmage, and subsequently repurchased by Messrs. Knoedler.

The painter's success at Court was not welcomed by his rivals, and envious tongues soon spread rumours that back-stairs influence had been employed to secure the commissions. These were at once contradicted by Bate, who took pains to make it clear that his friend owed the royal patronage only to his own merits. "Superior," he said, "to the ungentleman-like talk of offering the incense of adulation to any lordly courtier, his genius had never flourished under the beams of royal favour but for the judicious taste of the King himself." The King, it appeared, had been so struck with the merit of Gainsborough's work at the Academy of 1781 that he had sent for him at once to Buckingham House and offered him new commissions. The fortunate painter at the same time secured the patronage of the young Prince of Wales, who sat at Schomberg House several times in August and again in October. Gainsborough is described as making at this time a study of the Prince wearing the uniform of a general officer and "easily reclining on a massy sabre." The large portrait of the Prince of Wales standing by his horse, shown at the Academy in the succeeding spring, was also in progress in the autumn of 1781.

In October the first mention is made of one of Gainsborough's most exquisite portraits of women—the full-length of "Perdita" Robinson. It was finished by the end of the month, and currency was given to a rumour that it was to be sent to France. But of this famous work and of its sale for an absurdly small sum there is more to tell in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X

LONDON, 1782

Gainsborough commences a new picture—Many portraits in progress—Perdita Robinson—She sits to Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney—Gainsborough's portrait not a likeness—The tragedy of her life—Her goods seized by the sheriff—The famous portrait sold for thirty-two guineas—A crowd at the Academy—Sir Joshua and Gainsborough—Rival portraits of Colonel Tarleton—Gainsborough's landscapes—His *Girl with Pigs* bought by Sir Joshua—His letter with "half a hundred compliments"—How the *Girl with Pigs* was painted—Another portrait of "Dolly the Tall"—Portraits of the Prince of Wales and Colonel St. Leger—The Prince pays for both—Gainsborough painting the Prince's horse—An error corrected—Tarleton's portrait—"Would make an excellent sign for the 'Horse and Groom'"—Painting the Royal Family—Sir Joshua at Schomberg House.

ENCOURAGED by the success of *A Shepherd*, Gainsborough was engaged in January 1782 upon a companion to that picture in the shape of a study of a peasant girl gathering sticks in a wood. It was commenced with the idea of sending it to the Academy, but the capricious painter changed his mind and it was not shown at Somerset House. This may be the picture of a girl with a bundle of sticks in her arms that was lent by Captain Abdy to the National Loan Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in 1909–10, and exhibited as *The Cottage Girl*. An unfinished *Peasant Girl with Sticks* was sold by Mrs. Gainsborough nine years after her husband's death for five guineas.

February 1782 saw the completion of the full-length portrait of the Prince of Wales, and another of the Prince's friend, Colonel St. Leger; while a third was in hand of Colonel Tarleton, whose exploits in the American War were still fresh in the recollection of the public. In

March it was announced that Gainsborough's portrait of Colonel Tarleton was intended for the forthcoming Academy, together with those of the Prince of Wales, Colonel St. Leger, Mrs. Robinson, and Madame Bacelli —all full-lengths—and a kit-cat of the Duke of Dorset. Only four of these were afterwards exhibited. The Duke of Dorset's portrait may have been withdrawn because he did not care to appear with such publicity in the society of the Bacelli, the Italian dancer whom he had installed as mistress of Knole. The Duke was less particular later, when he allowed the lady to perform in public wearing his ribbon of the Garter, at the time, too, when he was Ambassador to the French Court. Walpole says in a letter to Hannah More: "The Bacelli lately danced at the Opera in Paris with a blue bandeau inscribed *Honi soit qui mal y pense.* Was it not ingenious, and was not the Ambassador so to allow it? No doubt he took it as a compliment to his own knee."

The withdrawal of the portrait of Perdita Robinson was probably caused by an article, full of scandalous gossip, which appeared in the *Public Advertiser* a fortnight before the opening of the Academy. The writer of the *Bon Ton Intelligence* in that journal comments in outspoken terms on the doings of the demi-monde. He says that Mrs. Robinson had turned to the best account her connection with the Prince of Wales (described as "a certain young gentleman"), and by threatening to publish his letters had obtained £10,000 as hush-money. Perdita had in fact been so prosperous that she had lately been enabled to give two commissions for portraits of herself to Romney, one to Gainsborough and one to Sir Joshua Reynolds. The writer says that he has seen them all, and gives an estimate of what he conceives to be their comparative value.

Sir Joshua's painting, a study of Perdita attired like the first wife of Rubens, he regards as incomparably the best, and he asserts that in this instance the President

MRS. ROBINSON

The Wallace Collection

not only outdoes his brother artists but excels himself. The head by Romney is placed second, and next to this the half-length by the same artist. Last of all comes the " whole-length sitting, in a modern dress " by Gainsborough, which is declared to be in no sense a likeness of the original. It is easy to understand that Gainsborough, reading a criticism of his portrait of Mrs. Robinson which condemned it as a likeness—the point above all others upon which he prided himself—and knowing that Reynolds was sending to the Academy a study of the same sitter, of which report spoke highly, may have been moved to withhold from exhibition a canvas that is ranked by modern critics among his masterpieces.

The original of this portrait was the young actress whose acquaintance with the Prince of Wales commenced at a performance of *A Winter's Tale*, in which she appeared as Perdita. Her intrigue with the Prince had recently terminated, although she was at this time in the flower of her beauty. Her alleged ill-treatment by the Prince of Wales had brought her a certain amount of public sympathy and an increase of popularity, and her admirers were innumerable. Mrs. Robinson's affections were, however, centred in the dashing cavalry officer, Colonel Tarleton, and her portrait by Gainsborough was to have been shown at the Academy with that of her lover from the same hand. Her deepest and most lasting attachment was for Tarleton, the man who was responsible, though unintentionally, for the tragedy of the unhappy Perdita's life. The writer of a memoir of Mrs. Robinson, published immediately after her death, states that the illness which made her a cripple owed its origin directly to Tarleton's financial troubles. For some unexplained reason—perhaps to pay a debt of honour—he was in urgent need of £800. The affair admitted of no delay; he must have the money at once or leave the country. Hearing this, Mrs. Robinson, who had no property upon which such an amount

could be raised, immediately applied to the person (apparently Fox) who had been the arbiter of her fortunes in the settlement made by the Prince of Wales. She asked for a loan of £800, and received £300 at once and the promise of the rest in the morning.

Meanwhile Tarleton, who knew nothing of her application and its result, had disappeared and could not be found anywhere, although he had promised to meet her the same night at the opera. Mrs. Robinson rightly concluded that he had departed, intentionally without saying good-bye, because she had declared that in the last extremity she would go with him, and he had refused to allow her as he had only £20 at his command. She knew the port Tarleton intended to sail from, and " with the passion and zeal of a generous mind, between two and three o'clock in the morning threw herself into a post-chaise to follow him, but without taking sufficient precautions of dress against the cold, although it was the depth of winter and the weather was very severe. She was agitated and heated with her apprehensions, and in that situation fell asleep. At the first stage she was obliged to be carried into the inn, almost frozen ; and from that hour she never recovered the entire use of her limbs. For a long period the joints of her fingers were contracted, but they were afterwards partially restored, and she could even write with facility. But from the time of that accident she could never walk nor even stand, and was always carried from one room to another and to and from her carriage. Mrs. Robinson consoled herself with having effected the service she proposed by this unfortunate journey, and never once was known peevishly to lament the irreparable consequences."

Crippled at twenty-four, this beautiful woman, who had been the pupil of Hannah More at Bristol and was for her time well educated, now betook herself to literature and managed to earn a considerable income for

some years. She was at one time connected with the *Morning Post*, and her parties, which were frequently attended by Sir Joshua Reynolds, attracted numbers of literary and artistic people. But in spite of her efforts Mrs. Robinson was always more or less in embarrassed circumstances, and in one of her periods of difficulty she was obliged to part with Gainsborough's portrait of herself. This incident has not been mentioned hitherto in any record of the life of the actress or the artist.

In 1785 Perdita's affairs were in such a hopeless state that an execution was put into her house in Berkeley Square by the Sheriff of Middlesex. Her furniture, wardrobe, diamonds, and other effects, including "the highly finished portrait of Mrs. Robinson by Gainsborough," were taken to the rooms of Messrs. Hutchins, Boulton & Philips, King Street, Covent Garden, where they were sold by auction. Before commencing to dispose of the goods the auctioneer stated that if anyone would pay or give security for £250 the sale would not proceed, but his offer met with no response. Mrs. Robinson's portrait, which was hanging on the wall between prints of her rival admirers, the Prince of Wales and Colonel Tarleton, was then put up; but it attracted few bids, and the famous canvas that is now in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House was knocked down for thirty-two guineas to some lucky purchaser whose name has not been recorded. He was probably an agent of the Prince of Wales, as in 1790 the "fine whole length portrait of Mrs. Robinson by Gainsborough" is described by a contemporary writer as then in possession of the Prince, from whose hands, as Mr. Lionel Cust discovered, the portrait passed in 1818 into those of the third Marquis of Hertford. To obtain the *Perdita* for thirty-two guineas was a bargain indeed; and fortunate too was the buyer at Sotheby's, who purchased Mrs. Robinson's memoirs nearly thirty years after her death. Written "chiefly on the backs of letters addressed to

her by the most distinguished persons of her time, with their seals and autographs," and running to several hundred pages, this remarkable collection of manuscripts fetched only £3, 8s. under the hammer.

In the spring of 1782, to which we now return after this digression, the opening of the Royal Academy was awaited with exceptional interest by those whose curiosity had been excited by the preliminary notes in the newspapers, then a new feature in journalism, and the rooms were crowded almost to the point of suffocation soon after the doors were thrown open on the 29th of April. The eighteenth century had few of our modern prejudices in favour of fresh air, but the endurance of the visitors was nevertheless severely tried on the first day at the Academy. "The curiosity of the town," declared one of them, "was so generally ardent, that before one, the room had such a crowd in it as made the atmosphere for the purpose of respiration a little irksome, and if our philosophy did not tell us that there is a power in the human lungs to redress themselves against climate we might not be without fear that the room might be insalutary. We certainly cannot err in recommending some means of ventilation."

The Exhibition, for the sake of seeing which many visitors on that April day must have suffered from Academy headache, was once more a battle ground for Gainsborough and Reynolds. The contest between the two was now a recognised thing, and it was more than ever marked this year because it was known that both artists had been painting Mrs. Robinson and the Bacelli, and that each was contributing a full-length of Colonel Tarleton to the Exhibition. "As usual," said the *Morning Chronicle*, "there is a proud rivalship between the pencil of the President and that of Mr. Gainsborough."

Sir Joshua contributed fifteen pictures, including a head of Mrs. Robinson, and a portrait of Colonel Tarleton, in which he showed the soldier in an unconventional

attitude, stooping to fasten a button on his knee as he stands beside his horse. Gainsborough, in addition to the rival portrait of Tarleton, sent his whole-lengths of the Prince of Wales, Colonel St. Leger and Madame Bacelli, and a fourth whole-length of Master Nicholls. These were accompanied by half-lengths or kit-cats of Lord Camden, Mrs. Fane, Miss Dalrymple and Mr. Merlin, together with a landscape and the picture *Girl with Pigs*. Bate, in prefacing his notice of Gainsborough's pictures, upheld his chosen painter before all the world. "The royal patronage seems to have had the most happy influence in calling forth the full powers of Mr. Gainsborough's pencil. The eleven pieces with which he has honoured the Exhibition, if they are not a satisfactory proof of the above assertion, demonstrate, however, that this celebrated artist has soared with genius to the highest regions of taste and may now content himself with a professional fame that few will ever arrive at, none excel!"

After this preliminary flourish he gives a glowing description of his friend's landscape. "Mr. Gainsborough has exhibited but one landscape—but that his *chef d'œuvre* in that line. It is an evening at sunset, representing a woodland scene, a sequestered cottage, peasants and their children before the cottage, and a woodman and his dog in the gloomy part of the scene returning from labour; the whole heightened by a water and sky that would have done honour to the most brilliant Claude Lorain." The picture thus described by Bate must be, I think, the landscape now in the collection of the Duke of Rutland, and lent by him for exhibition at the Guildhall and the Royal Academy, when it was described in the catalogues as *The Woodcutter's Home*. The descriptive note appended to the title of the picture in the catalogue of the Guildhall Exhibition of 1899, says: "At the door of a cottage is seated a young mother, nursing an infant; six other children are gathered round

her, and an elder girl is standing in the shadowed doorway of the cottage. Approaching from the right is the woodcutter, laden with wood, and accompanied by his dog. The right of the picture is occupied by a pleasant landscape showing the outskirts of a forest and the glistening light of sunset between the trees." *The Woodcutter's Home* was possibly one of the three landscapes known to have been purchased from Gainsborough by the fourth Duke of Rutland, for two of which he paid £160 and for the third, £60.

Bate has something more interesting to say about the second pastoral canvas exhibited by Gainsborough this year. He remarks, after praising the *Girl with Pigs*, that Sir Joshua Reynolds, " whose liberality is equal to his genius, the moment he saw this picture sent to know the price, and purchased it, sending a hundred guineas with half as many elegant compliments on the work of the artist, who is said to have written back 'that it could not fail to afford him the highest satisfaction that he had brought his pigs to so fair a market.' " It is common knowledge that Sir Joshua bought the picture, although he thought that Gainsborough might have made the girl more beautiful, but Bate throws a new and agreeable light on the transaction by his reference to the President's letter with its half a hundred compliments, of which no other record survives. Gainsborough's letter of thanks is still in existence, and the fact that Bate was able to quote a passage from it, almost literally, shows how closely he was in touch with the painter of the *Girl with Pigs*.

Nothing is said in Bate's article about Reynolds paying a hundred guineas for the picture for which Gainsborough had asked but sixty. Leslie, in his *Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, says the increased price was probably the fruits of a re-sale of the picture to M. de Calonne. But the President had the picture in his possession for some years, and did not part with it until after Gainsborough's

death, when he sold the *Girl with Pigs* to De Calonne for three hundred guineas "as a particular favour." Reynolds thought highly of the *Girl with Pigs*, as we know by a letter he wrote to the Earl of Upper Ossory in 1786. The Earl had sent for his inspection a much damaged canvas which Reynolds believed to be from the hand of Titian. He says so in his letter, and expresses a wish to acquire it with the view of improving its appearance by repainting certain portions, which he thinks no one but himself could accomplish satisfactorily. In a postscript Sir Joshua adds: "I am thinking what picture to offer you in exchange. What if I gave Gainsborough's *Pigs* for it? It is by far the best picture he ever painted, or perhaps ever will."

The *Girl with Pigs*, which was the most popular picture of the year at Somerset House in 1782, was painted, not in the country, but in Gainsborough's studio in Pall Mall, to which animals of various descriptions were brought at times. Parke, whom I have before quoted, gives an interesting glimpse of the studio while this picture was on the easel. He says: "Being acquainted with Gainsborough at the period when this work was in progress I have seen at his house in Pall Mall the three little pigs (who did not in the common phrase sit for their likenesses) gambolling about his painting room, whilst he at his easel was catching an attitude or a leer from them."

Gainsborough was applauded this year by the critics for an improvement in his colour, in which they no longer saw the glaring quality to which objection had been taken formerly. In this respect high praise was given to the portrait of Lord Camden, the great judge and ex-Lord Chancellor, who had been the friend and patron of Gainsborough at Bath. The colouring of this portrait at the Academy of 1782 is described as being in its sobriety in perfect harmony with its subject; while for the brilliant hues employed in the face of Madame

Bacelli, Gainsborough was excused. As one writer admitted, "the artist was not only obliged to vivify and embellish; but, if he would be thought to copy the original, to lay on his colouring thickly. In this he has succeeded, for the face of this admirable dancer is evidently *paint-painted*." The Bacelli's portrait appears to have been a good likeness, as several praise it for this quality. The Miss Dalrymple (Mrs. Elliott), whose charms were displayed this year by Gainsborough on a kit-cat canvas, was the notorious "Dolly the Tall" of whom, it will be remembered, he had exhibited another portrait in 1778. The comments on the expression of this lady were most unflattering, although her beauty was universally admitted. The *Public Advertiser* thought that Miss Dalrymple's eyes were far too characteristic of her vocation, and the shocked critic of the *London Courant* exclaims, "A wanton countenance, and such hair, good God!" Gainsborough appears to have maintained an extensive connection among the demi-monde, by whom Sir Joshua and the other fashionable portrait-painters of the time were also frequently employed. Severe things were said in some journals about the too frequent exhibition of the pictures of these women on the Academy walls. It was asserted that French visitors to our exhibitions were shocked at the indelicacy of placing, close to the portraits of women of rank and virtue, the presentments of these notorious persons, triumphant, as it were, in vice. "In Paris," remarked one writer, "such portraits would on no account be admitted; the name of the King is a sufficient check upon them to keep a just decorum in *his* Academy, and it is no small reflection upon our Academicians here to have as little regard for the dignity of their master as they seemingly have for their own."

It has been supposed that the whole-length portraits of the Prince of Wales and Colonel St. Leger, with their horses, were commissioned by the sitter in each case,

to present to the other ; but Bate's story, which is much more probable, is that the Prince paid for both. " St. Leger's furniture for his saddle has the Royal Star on it, which the Prince gave him and insisted on its being taken in the picture. They are both admirable likenesses, and Gainsborough has five hundred guineas each for them. They are painted at the expense of his Royal Highness, his own being intended for St. Leger, and St. Leger's for himself." The price seems extravagant when compared with those known to have been paid for portraits of the same period, but there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the statement. It was unchallenged at the time, and the writer was in the confidence of Gainsborough, and perhaps to some extent in that of the Prince.

The animal by which the Prince is seen standing in Gainsborough's portrait was a Spanish horse and a great favourite with its master. Of the painting of this horse a story was told by an occasional contributor to the journals of the day, who wrote above the initials " M.M.," and appears to have been on intimate terms not only with Gainsborough but with Hogarth and other artists. When Gainsborough was painting the Spanish horse, " M.M." was in his studio watching the progress of the work. He knew nothing of drawing and painting, yet he was convinced that something was wrong with one of the animal's feet, and his eye returned to it again and again. However, he could not say exactly what was the matter, but Gainsborough, when his attention was called to it, saw in an instant where the error lay, and after thanking his critic proceeded to correct the offending foot. Gainsborough's friend, " M.M.," to whom I shall refer again, says truly, " There are few painters —except excellent ones—that can bear to be told of faults in their pictures." He adds that Pine, " whose greatest defect was ill-drawing, painted and engraved Garrick humpback, and though told in time determined to let him go so."

Colonel Tarleton's equestrian portrait was less favourably received by the public than those of the Prince of Wales and St. Leger, and even Bate, who could see the highest excellence in almost everything touched by Gainsborough, admitted that the artist had sacrificed too much to "the full-speed ideas of a spirited martinet." Some of the franker critics compared the galloping colonel with the performers at Astley's, another complained that the hind part of the horse appeared to be less active than the fore, and one impudent writer suggested, with apparent gravity, that the portrait would make an excellent sign for the "Horse and Groom" at Chelsea.

It was generally believed that Gainsborough had designed this portrait upon a scheme of Tarleton's and against his own better judgment. Thicknesse declares that Gainsborough's attitude towards his sitters was one of extreme independence, and quotes in support of his assertion a story of an alderman whom the artist refused to paint because his appearance did not please him. But this is not borne out by certain incidents in Gainsborough's career. The correspondence with Lord Dartmouth, quoted in an earlier chapter, shows how complaisant he could be upon occasion. In one of the letters, which were written from Bath in 1771 to excuse his supposed failure to obtain a likeness in Lady Dartmouth's portrait, Gainsborough says that, though the statement may appear conceited, he was always able, before pulling the trigger, to see the cause of his missing. "But nothing is so common to me as to give up my own sight in my painting-room rather than hazard giving offence to my best customers." In the case of Tarleton Gainsborough evidently gave up his freedom of sight to the sitter, and a long letter, published by his friend in the *Morning Herald* while the Academy was still open, seems to have been written to prove to the public that the painter of the "galloping Colonel" was not responsible for the composition of the portrait.

To Mr. Gainsborough

SIR,—I consider every man who exhibits a picture as one who sets himself to receive either applause or censure, according to the merits of his performance. I leave it to the rest of the world to praise the excellence of your Pigs and your Prince. The intention of this address is to quarrel with you for hanging up that enormous sign of the Horse and Jockey, said to be the portrait of a gallant officer. I well know that those who employ architects and painters assume a right of advising and directing them, so that the houses and pictures, instead of being the work of the artist, are in general a miserable compound of judgment and ignorance. Pray inform the public—for your own sake tell us—whether you were the *real* designer of the picture above mentioned. Was there no *advice* (which in this case was equivalent to *direction*) upon the colour and attitude of the horse? Was the general disposition of the picture your own choice, or had you, as I much suspect, *no* choice in the business? You will pardon my freedom in asking you these questions in so public a manner, but the introduction of this address is my apology.

As it is impossible to believe that an artist of your very high rank can be pleased with a picture which a very slight knowledge must condemn, we must conclude that your complaisance got the better of your prudence; first in suffering your own ideas to give place to those who were incapable of directing you; and secondly, after letting yourself down so low as to paint a picture in such circumstances, to be prevailed upon to exhibit it.

I join in with the whole world in perfectly esteeming your great works; and, that you may produce more good pictures, I hope *all* your employers will in future resign *their opinion* to *your judgment*, and thus prevent you from receiving other disagreeable addresses besides this.—From yours,

VERITAS.

The *St. James's Chronicle*, which is the only journal that notices Gainsborough's *Master Nicholls* (The Pink Boy) and *Mr. Merlin*, pays the artist a curious compliment in the opening paragraph of its criticism. "Mr.

Gainsborough's residence in town has had an effect which Rousseau says is very usual on genius—it has given his productions a classic elegance which was the only circumstance wanting to class him with the most eminent painters this country has ever produced." The *Master Nicholls*, described as "a beautiful boy in a Vandyck dress, the grandson of the late Dr. Nicholls," does not meet with the entire approval of the critic of this journal, who thinks the rose-coloured drapery injurious to the general effect of the picture; and of the portrait of Mr. Merlin he says unkindly that "the subject affords no great scope for genius." Joseph Merlin was an ingenious mechanician, and as a maker of musical instruments particularly interesting to Gainsborough. Fanny Burney mentions that in January 1781, when she was staying at Streatham with the Thrales, Merlin came to the house "to tune the fortepiano." He was at Streatham again in June, when he spoke of the portrait referred to above. "During dessert," says Fanny Burney, "mention was made of my father's picture, when the ridiculous creature (Merlin) exclaimed, 'Oh! for that picture of Dr. Burney, Sir Joshua Reynolds has not taken pains, *that is* to please me—I do not like it. Mr. Gainsborough has done one much more better of me, which is very agreeable indeed. I wish it had been at the Exhibition, for it would have done him a great deal of credit indeed.'" It was perhaps at Merlin's request that Gainsborough sent his portrait to the Academy of 1782.

In September Gainsborough was at Windsor, painting the Royal Family by command of the Queen. Towards the end of the month it is announced that many of the fifteen portraits are finished "in that superior style which has long distinguished this artist's celebrated pencil." A little later the *Morning Herald* is able to record the completion of the series, and this agrees with the statement of Redgrave, who, as Surveyor of the Royal Pic-

tures, was at one time in charge of these portraits, and says that they are all dated on the back as painted in September 1782.

Later in the autumn Gainsborough's sitters included the Duchess of Rutland, Lady Stormont and Lady Priscilla Burrell, who in October are described as " the natural and lively subjects that at present engross the pencil of this celebrated artist." Lady Stormont, who as the Countess of Mansfield has been immortalised by Romney, was the younger sister of the beautiful Mrs. Graham whose portrait by Gainsborough is now at Edinburgh. Lady Priscilla Burrell was the wife of Sir Peter Burrell, in whom in later years Gainsborough found a generous friend and patron.

Gainsborough commenced in November his portrait of Sir Joshua Reynolds, of which all trace appears to have been lost. The purchase of the *Girl with Pigs* earlier in the year, and the friendly correspondence which followed that transaction, evidently brought about some connection between the rival painters, for Sir Joshua was sitting at Gainsborough's house on Sunday, November 3rd, and he had an appointment for the following Sunday. But in the interval Sir Joshua was taken ill, and after his recovery the sittings were not resumed. Northcote says that they were only commenced at the solicitation of Gainsborough, and that the reason they were not proceeded with was that Sir Joshua made no offer to paint Gainsborough in return. Of this, adds Northcote, Sir Joshua never had any intention, as he heard him declare. Bate, on the other hand, while deploring, after Gainsborough's death, that the portraits were not painted, stated that " the canvas was stretched for both." The two artists are not known to have had any further communication with each other until they met in 1788, when Gainsborough was dying.

CHAPTER XI

LONDON, 1783

Fifteen royal portraits—Gainsborough's letter to the Council—The Academy—The Duchess of Devonshire at the private view—"By no means an elegant woman"—Flattered in Gainsborough's portrait—A missing portrait of her Grace—Gainsborough paints a full length of her in forty-five minutes—The beautiful Mrs. Sheridan—The portrait of 1783 not the Rothschild portrait—The *Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting*—More friction at the Academy—Lady Horatia Waldegrave's portrait—Unmentioned in the catalogue—Hung on the chimney board—Gainsborough's indignation—Tries to withdraw his pictures—John Gainsborough—A tour in the Lake Country—Gainsborough commences *The Mall, St. James's Park*.

Lord Rawdon (afterwards Marquis of Hastings and Governor-General of India) and Lord Cornwallis were sitting alternately at Schomberg House at the beginning of 1783. Each of these eminent soldiers had requested Gainsborough to paint his portrait for presentation to the other, and that of Lord Cornwallis was intended for the Academy Exhibition of the forthcoming April. The portrait of Lord Cornwallis now in the National Portrait Gallery is probably the one painted by Gainsborough at this time, and it is therefore interesting to know that contemporary opinion considered it a good likeness. In March the Earl of Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, gave sittings for the full-length portrait now at Greenwich Hospital, which was described as commissioned by Sir Hugh Palliser for presentation to the Hospital as a recognition of the First Lord's patronage of that institution. Gainsborough's acquaintance with Lord Sandwich (the "Jemmy Twitcher" of the political paragraphists of the time) had commenced long before these sittings. Several years earlier Gainsborough had

painted for Lord Sandwich a portrait of his ill-fated mistress, Martha Ray, whose murder by a clergyman on the steps of Covent Garden Theatre thrilled and shocked London, and brought about a temporary quarrel between Dr. Johnson and his friend Beauclerk.

The portrait of Lord Sandwich, like that of Lord Cornwallis, was painted for exhibition at the Royal Academy, and Gainsborough sent both to Somerset House in April, in company with a group of works that was larger and more varied in nature than any of the painter's previous contributions. The pictures sent from Schomberg House, in addition to the two mentioned, were whole-lengths of the Duchess of Devonshire, the Duke of Northumberland, Sir Charles Gould, Sir Harbord Harbord (afterwards Lord Suffield), and Mrs. Sheridan; a half-length of Mr. Ramus, a picture of *Two Shepherd Boys with Fighting Dogs*, a landscape and a seapiece, and, finally, the portraits of those members of the Royal Family whom he had painted at Windsor in the preceding September. The royal portraits, fifteen in all, were identical in size and shape, and represented the heads and busts of the originals on the scale of life.

Gainsborough sent two letters to the Academy about the royal portraits. One of them, threatening in its terms, was addressed to the Council:

"Mr. Gainsborough presents his compliments to the Gentlemen appointed to hang the pictures at the Royal Academy; and begs leave to *hint* to them that if the Royal Family, which he has sent for this Exhibition (*being smaller than three quarters*) are hung above the line with full-lengths, he never more, whilst he breathes, will send another picture to the Exhibition.—This he swears by God.

"Saturday Morn."

The second communication was a note of a more friendly and private nature, addressed to F. M. Newton, R.A., the Secretary, in which he explained exactly how

he wished the royalties to be placed. To make his meaning clearer he sent with the letter a sketch which is still preserved at Burlington House, showing the fifteen portraits arranged in three rows of five each, commencing with the King at the top left-hand corner and ending at the bottom with the youngest Prince.

At Somerset House the rooms were thronged in the first week of the Exhibition by what are described as "crowds prodigiously great," and among the earliest of the visitors was the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire, who had come to see how her own portrait looked on the walls of the Academy. The Duchess, who had been ill recently, was now completely recovered, and "looked and moved as well and as sprightly as ever." Her portrait was naturally a centre of interest, but less so than Gainsborough's studies of the Royal Family.

These were arranged in three rows of five exactly as the artist had desired, with all the frames touching and the whole forming in appearance one picture in fifteen compartments. Hanging opposite to the entrance of the gallery, the portraits attracted the immediate attention of every visitor, but they were far from being universally acclaimed, whether as likenesses or as paintings. As in the case of the portrait of Colonel Tarleton, exhibited the year before, it was felt that the artist had painted the Royal Family, and shown them in such a singular fashion, to please his patrons and against his own inclination. "We can only say," remarked the *St. James's Chronicle*, "that these pictures are prettily painted, but the various positions of the faces are by no means well chosen. . . . The whole, even to the method of framing them, is a childish conceit and by no means worthy of Mr. Gainsborough. We suppose, therefore, that it had another origin." The *Morning Chronicle* also believed that the compulsive elaboration of such a work could have had nothing to do with the painter's choice, and that the affair must have placed him in one of the

most embarrassing dilemmas in which art can be involved. "All that belongs to Mr. Gainsborough on this occasion is the praise of extrication. He has contrived to get off pretty well." The writer of this comment said that of the portraits the Princess Royal's was the best and that of the King the worst. Horace Walpole also thought the portrait of the King unfavourable as a likeness. The Prince of Wales, he said, was very like and the best of the set; the Princess Elizabeth the next best, and most of the rest weak and inanimate. Bate, of course, praised the Royalties, but not too enthusiastically, and by a curious chance mentions among them only the portraits of the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth, the three "Eldest Princesses" about whom Gainsborough was next year to quarrel irrevocably with the Academy. Peter Pindar liked the royal portraits so little that he affected to disbelieve that Gainsborough was their author, and wrote of them—

"For let me perish if I think them thine."

In this series of portraits the Royal Family was completely represented, with one exception. This was Prince Frederick, better known as the Duke of York, who was travelling abroad when the rest of the family were painted at Windsor. But there has always been a tradition that Gainsborough painted the royal sons and daughters without exception, and as no portrait by him of the Duke of York is to be found at Windsor it has been supposed that one must be in existence somewhere else. Perhaps this may explain why more than one newly-discovered painting, attributed to Gainsborough, has been described as a representation of the Duke. As a matter of fact Gainsborough never painted a portrait of the Duke of York.

The portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire, shown this year, was, I think, the only one of her Grace exhibited by Gainsborough at the Royal Academy. In dealing

with the pictures of 1778 I gave my reasons for doubting the commonly accepted statement that he showed a portrait of the Duchess in that year, and those reasons are supported by some remarks on the Exhibition of 1783 by a contributor to the *Public Advertiser*. In a notice of the Academy, he writes :

" We stopped in our article of yesterday near Gainsborough's portrait of Sir Charles Gould, which not only has much positive merit but has, besides, the absence of all detraction from comparison, a circumstance which materially affects the judgments of Gainsborough's portraits of Lady Horatia Waldegrave, the Duchess of Devonshire, and Mrs. Sheridan, all of whom we have seen painted by the President. Sir Charles Gould's portrait is not exposed to this disadvantage of contrast, and is therefore all the more satisfactory."

This suggests that the writer has no knowledge of an earlier portrait of the Duchess by Gainsborough, and regards the one of 1783 as the first the artist has yet shown of her. The portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire by Sir Joshua, with which he compares that of Gainsborough, was at the Academy in 1776. It is unfortunate that although the journals of 1783 contain many references to Gainsborough's *Duchess of Devonshire*, none of them that I have been able to find gives any kind of description that would ensure the identification of the portrait. The notices of it were not entirely eulogistic, and even Bate, who in the previous summer had urged Gainsborough so strenuously to seek his ideal model in the leader of the society of the day, only says, " The portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire is after Mr. Gainsborough's best manner ; the attitude she is shown in is graceful and easy." The *Morning Post* describes the Duchess as painted in the same style as Mrs. Sheridan, but omits to say what that style is. The critic of the *St. James's Chronicle* speaks of Gainsborough's portrait as " A very elegant picture of the Duchess of Devonshire, who in our opinion

is by no means an elegant woman. There is a hoydening affability about her, sanctified by her rank and fortune, which has rendered her popular. Mr. Gainsborough has given her as she might have been if retouched and educated by the Graces." This description accords with the simplicity of the portrait in Earl Spencer's collection at Althorp, in which Gainsborough depicts the Duchess wearing a modest white robe, and makes her, perhaps, rather more slender in figure than she was in 1783. Walpole's brief criticism of the Academy portrait, " Too greenish," further identifies it with the Althorp canvas, in the background of which green tones are carried even into the architectural features.

Although Gainsborough appears to have exhibited only one portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire he certainly painted at least three. Bate in his correction of Thicknesse's anecdote mentions two, " one of which Lady Spencer has, the other, we think, is in Mr. Boothby's possession." Lady Spencer's portrait is presumably the one now at Althorp and mentioned in the preceding paragraph, but as to the other we can only speculate. Why Mr. Boothby should own a portrait of the Duchess is not clear, nor is it certain to which person of the name Bate refers. Most likely he was the Mr. Boothby whose name figures in a plan of the Opera House in 1783 as co-tenant of a box with the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, and this may be the same person mentioned by Walpole as a leader, or would-be leader, of fashion, and commonly known as " Prince " Boothby.

Unfortunately, nothing is known of the subsequent history of Mr. Boothby's portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire, which some may connect with the mysterious " Stolen Duchess," bought by the late Mr. Wynn Ellis seventy or eighty years ago for about sixty guineas and sold at Christie's after his death for £10,605. The portrait, a three-quarter length of a lady in blue with a large hat, supposed to represent Georgiana, Duchess of

Devonshire, was stolen from Messrs. Agnew's gallery in Bond Street in May 1876 and remained concealed for twenty-five years, when it was discovered in America and brought back to London. It was exhibited in Bond Street by Messrs. Agnew, and afterwards sold by them to the late Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan.

A third portrait of the Duchess is mentioned by Bate, but this, apparently, was no more than a sketch. "Hoppner the painter has a portrait in his possession of the Duchess of Devonshire; it was painted by the immortal Gainsborough, and is one of the most hasty full-lengths ever taken—the Duchess sat but three times for it and was never longer than fifteen minutes at a sitting. Mr. Hoppner has derived from this picture much real benefit, for, by studying the freedom of the handling and the clearness of the colouring, he has improved in requisites he needed much." This paragraph was written a few months after Gainsborough's death. Hoppner appears to have owned a second work by the artist, as a little later he was offering "a capital picture by Gainsborough for sale by private contract."

Mrs. Sheridan (Eliza Linley), of whom Gainsborough exhibited a full-length portrait in 1783, sat many times to him both before and after her romantic marriage to the statesman-dramatist. Gainsborough mentions her in one of his earliest letters to William Jackson of Exeter as sitting to him with her brother, probably for the exquisite portrait, recently at Knole but now in America, in which she is shown with the little boy leaning his head on her shoulder. Mrs. Sheridan was the daughter of Thomas Linley, a professor of music at Bath. William Jackson, who, like Gainsborough, had known Eliza Linley from her childhood, says that she was taught to sing by her father at a very early age, and that she performed in public before she was twelve years old. At nineteen, just before the marriage which brought her professional career to an end, her singing in the oratorios

at Drury Lane captivated the musical world of London. "The whole town seems distracted about her," says Fanny Burney in the spring of 1773. "Every other diversion is forsaken; Miss Linley alone engrosses all eyes, ears, hearts."

Jackson, who seems himself to have been more than a little in love with the exquisite Maid of Bath, says of her beauty that to see her as she stood singing beside him at the piano was like looking into the face of an angel.

"Her voice," he says, "was remarkably sweet and her scale just and perfect; from the lowest to the highest note the tone was of the same quality. She had great flexibility of throat, and whether the passage was slow or rapid the intervals were always precisely in tune. As she never willingly sang any songs but those of real melody and expression, the goodness of her choice added to her reputation. Her genius and sense gave a consequence to her performance which no fool with the voice of an angel could ever attain; and to these qualifications was added the most beautiful person, expressive of the soul within. As a singer she is perished for ever, as a woman she still exists in a picture painted by Gainsborough."

To the grace and charm of this accomplished woman many of her contemporaries have testified, and of her extraordinary beauty Gainsborough's portraits are sufficient proof. Which of these was exhibited at the Academy of 1783 is uncertain. The distinction is claimed for the fine full-length in the collection of Lord Rothschild, but erroneously, I think, unless Gainsborough painted two portraits of her similar in size and composition. Unfortunately, as in the case of the Duchess of Devonshire, the newspaper critics give no hints that might lead to a settlement of the question. One says that Gainsborough has caught Mrs. Sheridan with her best looks on, and that the drapery is finely touched and rich in colour—but does not say what the colour is! In the *Morning Herald* Bate, the common friend of the

artist and the sitter, says that Mrs. Sheridan appears in the picture with every advantage that painting can bestow, and he, too, praises the rendering of the draperies. But a third writer brings in the inevitable comparison with Reynolds :

" Gainsborough's whole-length of Mrs. Sheridan is by no means successfully imagined. Though the attitude and disposition are tolerably different, yet the subject being the same, it is impossible not to think of the President's highly-finished portrait of this lady. It is always a disadvantage to Gainsborough when he is obliged to try his skill after the more curious felicity of Sir Joshua."

If the Rothschild portrait is the one exhibited in 1783 it is much more than " tolerably different " from the painting by Reynolds, which shows her at the organ as St. Cecilia. In Lord Rothschild's portrait she is depicted in modern dress, seated in a meadow, and in the absence of any proof to the contrary it seems probable that this is not the one of 1783 but another study of Mrs. Sheridan commenced by Gainsborough in 1785, of which I shall speak in due course. In any case my researches show that Gainsborough painted a full-length portrait of Mrs. Sheridan which is unmentioned by the artist's biographers, and has been lost sight of, it is to be hoped, only temporarily. Some day perhaps it may reappear unexpectedly and cause a sensation at Christie's akin to that occasioned ten years ago by the exhibition of the Worthing portrait of Mrs. Sheridan in the famous auction-room at King Street. I remember seeing that portrait the first day it was shown and being struck by its beauty. Its authenticity was obvious to anyone acquainted with Gainsborough's work, but the canvas was in such a bad state that it seemed doubtful whether the bidding would be high. Its size was only thirty inches by twenty-five, and there were holes in the lower portion, one of them nearly as large as a shilling, but its charm was irresistible, and Mr. Charles Wertheimer was

accounted fortunate when he secured the prize for nine thousand guineas. This portrait of Mrs. Sheridan was sent to Christie's by a lady living at Worthing who had little idea of its value and none of the identity of the person represented. She knew nothing of its history beyond the fact that it was in the possession of her family before she was born.

At the Royal Academy of 1783 all Gainsborough's portraits of men, other than those in the royal group, were highly praised for their likeness and characterisation. Bate says of the portrait of Sir Harbord Harbord, Member of Parliament for Norwich, that it is so true to the original "that if he represents his Norwich friends as faithfully as he himself is represented we may continue the pun and say he will deserve a good canvass"—a joke that has served more than once in the history of the arts. The portrait of Lord Sandwich was also admired as a picture, but the noble Lord's personality was evidently objectionable to the critic of the *St. James's Chronicle*, the same writer who thought so poorly of the looks of the Duchess of Devonshire. He says of Lord Sandwich, whom Gainsborough shows with a plan of Greenwich Hospital in his hand, that the face, figure, and draperies are charmingly painted, but that "the artist having directed his Lordship's thoughts, as the thoughts of old and great sinners are sometimes directed, to hospitals and infirmaries, his countenance wants that sarcastic vivacity which has always distinguished him."

An amusing error in criticism was made by the *Morning Post*, which, in dealing with another portrait, remarked: "It is one of Gainsborough's excellencies that he is constantly giving variety and novelty to his pictures, in composition, drapery, &c., so that however his manner may be discovered by some connoisseurs he will not be readily traced by his sameness." The portrait the critic was discussing was that of Lord Harrington, and it is not surprising that he found some difference between its

manner and that of the ordinary painting of Gainsborough. Lord Harrington's portrait was by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The *Sea-piece—A Calm* (240) attracted little attention, and even Bate was obliged to admit that it was not equal to other subjects of a similar nature from the same hand. Gainsborough had no high opinion of it himself, as he told the Academy secretary that it might be put away in the small room if necessary. On the other hand the *Landscape* (34) was universally admired. It was spoken of as a triumph—" a fine example of the kind of work with which his friends would like to see him occupied always, and which he does *con amore*. Portrait-painting he always seems to struggle through with the impatience that indicates it to be considered as a task of duty." The landscape at the Academy is described as a romantic view with distant trees and a beautiful sky. " A precipice is the principal object in the foreground, with several figures, sheep, &c., descending to a rivulet that gushes through a cranny in the earth." It appears at this Exhibition to have shared the fate of many of Gainsborough's landscapes in being hung too low, for it occupied a space on the wall beneath his *Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting*.

This picture of the boys and dogs was, in the opinion of many, the best work shown by Gainsborough at the exhibition of 1783. The artist in writing at this time to his friend, Sir William Chambers, R.A., the Treasurer to the Royal Academy and the designer of Somerset House, says : " I sent my Fighting Dogs to divert you. I believe next exhibition I shall make the boys fighting and the dogs looking on ; you know my cunning way of avoiding great subjects in painting, and of concealing my ignorance by a flash in the pan. . . . If I can pick pockets in the portrait way two or three years longer I intend to sneak into a cot, and turn a serious fellow. I know you think me right and can look down upon Cock-Sparrow with compassion."

LADY HORATIA WALDEGRAVE

(The " Fireplace " Portrait)

By permission of Mr. Hugh F. Seymour

But for Gainsborough there was to be no next exhibition. Before the opening of the Academy of 1784 he was to quarrel irrevocably with the authorities at Somerset House, and that final quarrel was led up to by the scandalous treatment of a picture at the Exhibition about which I am now writing. The picture is unmentioned in the Academy catalogue of 1783, and there is not a word about the incident of its bad hanging and the protest which followed in any biography or book upon Gainsborough from Thicknesse down to the present day.

In his first article in the *Morning Herald* upon the Exhibition of 1783, Bate, after giving the customary eulogy of Gainsborough and the list of his pictures, adds: "Besides the foregoing is a portrait of Lady Horatia Walpole, omitted to be mentioned in the catalogue." The "Walpole" was, of course, a slip of the pen, excusable in the circumstances. Bate intended to write "Waldegrave" in referring to this picture, to the consideration of which he returns on the following day. He begins a second long notice of Gainsborough's work with an angry protest against the treatment of Lady Horatia's portrait by the Hanging Committee. "On resuming our investigation of Mr. Gainsborough's performances it seems equitable to commence with the portrait of Lady Horatia Waldegrave on account of its being omitted in the catalogue; and which, with the best pretensions to pre-eminence, has the most humiliating position in the Academy, being placed against the chimney-board of the fireplace. A respect for the fair original would move one's indignation were it not that Mr. Gainsborough has done her in every other respect all possible justice. The likeness is very great and the pencilling exquisite." Other critics speak favourably of this portrait of Lady Horatia, and a writer, unacquainted with the name of the original, mentions as excellent "the lady under the miniatures." The *Gazetteer* supports the protest of the *Morning Herald* in an amusing para-

graph which reveals the critic's admiration for Lady Horatia's acknowledged beauty: "The situation the portrait of Lady Horatia Waldegrave has at the Royal Academy; it being hung against the chimney-board, is sufficient to provoke the temper of an anchorite; and although one must admit she would make a charming companion for a fireside, it is not necessary that she should occupy the very fireplace, particularly while she has it in her person to kindle flames by other means."

Gainsborough's anger at the contemptuous treatment of his work must have been increased by the recollection of his rival's famous group of Lady Horatia and her sisters, with which Sir Joshua had triumphed two years earlier at the Academy of 1781. For Gainsborough there was no triumph, and little likelihood that even a glimpse of his portrait would be obtained by many of the visitors to the Exhibition. The position of the picture in the fireplace was far worse than appears at first sight. At the Academy Exhibitions of those days the miniatures were hung above and on either side of the mantelpiece in the great room, and as the miniature was fashionable at that period, a crowd was almost always gathered in front of the little pictures which, of course, needed close inspection. "The miniatures," wrote a visitor of 1782, "are not easily to be approached. We were, however, near enough to see the heads of the Prince of Wales, Mr. Keate, and Mr. Edward Tighe." In such conditions Gainsborough's portrait in the fireplace must have been hidden entirely during a great part of the day, and its surface probably brushed by the ample draperies of the ladies pressing forward to see the miniatures immediately above it. That Gainsborough should have been indignant was only natural, and a note published in the *Artists' Repository* two years afterwards, shows that the incident came near to bringing about the final rupture with the Academy in 1783 instead of 1784. The *Artists' Repository* of 1785, after commenting on

Gainsborough's withdrawal of his pictures in the preceding year, adds: "He endeavoured to do so in 1783, but was over-persuaded and left the Council in great wrath."

The portrait so unfairly placed at the Academy is now in the possession of Mr. Hugh F. Seymour, a great-grandson of Lady Horatia. It is a graceful study of the head and bust of the beautiful girl, whose "gentleness, sweetness, and modesty" so charmed her great-uncle, Horace Walpole. The portrait, an oval in a square frame, shows Lady Horatia in a white dress with a low bodice. She wears a bow of blue ribbon at her breast, and a blue fillet binds her powdered hair, one curl of which falls on her right shoulder. Mr. Seymour has several other portraits of his ancestress at later periods of her life, one of which is a fine miniature by Bone.

In 1783 the Free Society of Artists held its last exhibition at a room in the Haymarket. Gainsborough, De Loutherbourg, Bartolozzi and Angelica Kauffman were all represented on this occasion, perhaps out of goodnature, with some faint hope of keeping alive a little longer a moribund association; for neither credit nor profit was to be gained by exhibiting at the Free Society. Gainsborough's contributions were two landscapes.

A letter written by Gainsborough to his sister, Mrs. Dupont, in the autumn of 1783, shows that the prosperous artist was then giving financial assistance to his eldest brother John, the humblest member of the family. John Gainsborough, who spent all his life at Sudbury, lived in Sepulchre Street (now Gainsborough Street) in a house next door to that in which his painter brother is said to have been born. Philip Thicknesse, in his book on Gainsborough, mentions calling at John's house in Sudbury when he was passing through the town, and gives a picture of the unhappy visionary living in the meanest circumstances with a wife and seven daughters dependent upon him. The ex-Governor men-

tions that although the family had beef for dinner they had no bread to eat with it until he provided the money to buy some. John Gainsborough was a crazy inventor with perhaps a touch of the genius, and certainly an overwhelming share of the eccentricities, of his brother Thomas. He showed the charitable visitor a cradle that rocked by itself, a cuckoo that sang all the year round, and other curiosities of his designing. Thicknesse, in the temporary absence of John, asked his wife if her artist brother-in-law sent them any money, and she said that he did but that her husband spent every penny on brass-work for his inventions. The book in which these recollections of the visit to Sudbury were given was written by Thicknesse in 1788, soon after the death of Thomas Gainsborough, and they are followed by some speculations as to what the unfortunate John will do, "now that he has lost the aid of his excellent brother, for, alas! without aid he cannot subsist."

But the letter to Mrs. Dupont, to which I refer, shows that the aid rendered by the "excellent brother" was very small. Gainsborough, as all who have written about him agree, was most generous to his friends, and there are many stories of the careless way in which he disposed of his pictures and drawings, and the contents of his purse. Yet, in writing to his sister on September 29, 1783, he says:

"I promised John, when he did me the honour of a visit in town, to allow him half a crown a week; which with what his good cousin Gainsborough allows him, and sister Gibbon, I hope will (if applied properly *to his own use*) render the remainder of his old age tolerably comfortable; for villainously old he is indeed grown. I have herewith sent you three guineas, with which I beg the favour of you to supply him for half a year with 2*s.* 6*d.* per week; paying him what day of the week you judge most good. I should think not on the same days that either sister Gibbon's two shillings is paid, nor on those days which his cousin do for him. And that he

may not know but what you advance the money out of your own pocket, I have enclosed a letter that you may show him, which may give you a better power to manage him if troublesome to you."

In the letter he speaks of as enclosed, which was to be shown to the recipient, Gainsborough writes :

" I beg the favour of you to advance half a crown a week to Brother John, for his own use, from this Michaelmas, and I will pay you again the first opportunity. I thought what I gave him when in London sufficient to last till this time, which is the reason I did not trouble you with a line sooner."

These letters do not show Gainsborough in a pleasant light. John no doubt was regarded as an encumbrance and something of a nuisance by the family generally, but considering the ease and rapidity with which the artist earned large sums, and that he had a wife with private means, the half a crown doled out weekly to a poor old man—for John was many years his brother's senior—does not err on the side of generosity. It is satisfactory to know that Gainsborough's daughter Margaret subsequently behaved more charitably to the last surviving child of her uncle John. To this cousin, Ann Gainsborough, Margaret made an allowance of twenty pounds a year. Ann Gainsborough, the last surviving niece of Gainsborough who bore his name, lived to be seventy-four. Like many others of her family she died suddenly. She appears to have inherited some of her father's peculiarities, and lived alone in her house at Sudbury. The woman who attended to her came one morning in 1840 to light the fires, and guessed that something was wrong as she could not hear her mistress talking to herself, as was her invariable custom. She had died in the night through the rupture of a blood-vessel on the brain.

In the summer of 1783 Gainsborough went for a sketching tour through the Lake country with his old

friend of Ipswich days, the attorney, Samuel Kilderbee, who by his own account found the artist a delightful travelling companion. The projected excursion, which gave the artist material for several new landscapes, is mentioned in a letter to William Pearce which shows that Gainsborough, though not a reading man, must have had some acquaintance with the poets :

"KEW GREEN, *Sunday morning—Church Time.*

"DEAR SIR,—I don't know if I told you that I'm going along with a Suffolk friend to visit the Lakes in Cumberland and Westmoreland, and purpose, when I come back, to show you that your Grays and Dr. Brownes are tawdry fan-painters. I purpose to mount all the Lakes at the next Exhibition in the great stile, and you know, if the people don't like them, 'tis only jumping into one of the deepest of them from off a wooded island, and my respectable reputation will be fixed for ever. I took the liberty of sending you a little Perry out of Worcestershire, and when the weather sets in hot again should be much obliged if you and Mrs. P.—— would drink a little of it, and fancy it Champagne for my sake. I doubt whether I can shake you by the hand before I go, but when I come back I'll shake you by the collar if you'll promise to keep your hands still. Most sincerely yours,

"THOS. GAINSBOROUGH."

He was at home again early in October, painting a portrait of the Duchess of Cumberland, the capricious and haughty lady who gave Wright of Derby his only commission during his first season in Bath, and nearly drove him frantic by her vagaries. Gainsborough appears to have been able to satisfy her somewhat exigent taste, as the portrait of her Royal Highness, "in her robes of State, with other paraphernalia of dignity," was finished in November, when her husband, the Duke of Cumberland, took her place as a sitter at Schomberg House. The portrait of the Duchess was intended as a present

for the Prince of Wales, who himself sat this autumn to Gainsborough for another portrait.

Bate now gives a piece of information of far greater value and interest than the news about the royal portraits. The date of the painting of the famous picture commonly known as *The Mall, St. James's Park,* has been given by Fulcher and others as 1786, but a note in the *Morning Herald* proves that it belongs to a period three years earlier. "Gainsborough is working on a magnificent picture in a style new to his hand; a park with a number of figures walking in it. To the connoisseur the most compendious information is to say that it comes nearest to the manner of Watteau, but to say no more it is Watteau far outdone." *The Mall* was soon finished, for in December a correspondent of another journal announces the completion of "the very fine picture Gainsborough has painted in a manner new to him, the manner of Watteau. It is, we understand, for the collection of his Majesty." The King, however, did not buy *The Mall,* which remained on Gainsborough's hands unsold until the day of his death. The writer who reports the completion of *The Mall* is responsible for a statement that Gainsborough was engaged at the end of 1783 upon a full-length portrait of Mrs. Siddons, but this is not corroborated by Bate. It is possible that such a portrait may have been commenced experimentally, but nothing of the kind is known to exist. Lord Rodney was sitting to Gainsborough just before Christmas, when the portrait of the Admiral is described as being in point of likeness "one of the most exact imitations of nature that was ever exhibited upon canvas."

CHAPTER XII

LONDON, 1784

Eighteen pictures for the Academy—List of the full-length portraits —*The Eldest Princesses*—Dispute about its position—Gainsborough withdraws all his pictures—His letter to the Hanging Committee—The origin of the trouble—Said to be political—The Westminster election—Proposed new Exhibition—The Duchess and the Westminster electors—The Academy without Gainsborough—Hoppner an art critic for the *Morning Post*—Gainsborough arranges a private gallery for his work—List and description of the pictures shown—*The Eldest Princesses*—*The Mall, St. James's Park*—The Prince of Wales's Landscape—Sir Joshua Reynolds appointed portrait-painter to the King.

In the early days of 1784 there were no indications of the forthcoming dispute with the Royal Academy Council that was to deprive the Exhibition at Somerset House of any support from Gainsborough in the last years of his life. The unfortunate episode of the portrait in the fireplace, if not forgotten was condoned, and the studio in Pall Mall was full of pictures, finished and in progress, which the artist intended to send to the Academy in April. Everything seemed to promise well. The King was sitting for another portrait, and the group of the three eldest Princesses upon which Gainsborough had been at work for some time was completed, and was to go to Somerset House with seventeen other canvases, one of which was *The Mall*, mentioned in the preceding chapter.

Unfortunately no contemporary journal gives a complete list of Gainsborough's intended contributions for 1784, but the titles of eight of them are to be seen on a sheet of paper, yellowed with age, in the possession of the Royal Academy. At the top is written in the

THE ELDEST PRINCESSES

painter's hand, "Portraits by T. Gainsborough, the frames sent." Then follow in the order named, rough pen and ink sketches of the portraits of the three eldest Princesses, Lady Buckinghamshire, Lord Buckinghamshire, Lord Rodney, Lord Rawdon, "two boys with a dog—Master Tomkinsons," and Lord Hood. Finally Gainsborough sketches what he describes as a "family picture, Mr. Bailey," which is the well-known group of *The Baillie Family* now in the National Gallery. He writes below the sketches, "*N.B.* The frame of the Princesses cannot be sent but with the picture as their Majesties are to have a private view of the picture at Buckingham House before it is sent to the Royal Academy." The sketches of the Buckinghamshires, Lord Rodney, Lord Rawdon, and the Tomkinson boys are ticked at the side in red, and in the same ink "come" is written on the sheet to indicate that these particular works or their frames had been received at the Academy.

There was every prospect of a brilliant display of Gainsborough's work at the Exhibition, but it was destroyed all at once by a notification in the *Morning Herald* of April 22nd, that the artist had been obliged to withdraw his pictures because the Council would not hang one of them in a particular light, although he had left to their discretion the placing of all his other works. This notice, which was accompanied by some vigorous remarks condemnatory of the Academy's action, was followed on the next day by an announcement in the same paper that the picture in dispute was the portrait group of the three eldest Princesses, the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth, painted by Gainsborough to the order of the Prince of Wales for the State Room at Carlton House, where a frame for its reception had been built at a certain elevation into one of the panels.

"The requisition the artist made," said Bate, "to hang it at the same height in the Exhibition room, ought

certainly to have been attended to in so particular an instance, especially when it is remembered that the colouring is tender and delicate, so that the effect must be destroyed by an injudicious elevation. Sir Joshua Reynolds has very critically observed in one of his Academical lectures that 'there can be no *rule* to obtain excellence; for if all the graces can be obtained by rule, *genius* must be destroyed.' The full-length line of the Academy ought on an analogy of principle to be always excepted against when the work of a master, as in the case of Mr. Gainsborough, requires a particular light to do it justice in."

The secession of Gainsborough attracted great attention in the public journals, which were divided in opinion as to the justice and wisdom of the Academy's treatment of the artist. They differed too in their accounts of the proceedings that prefaced the secession. According to the *Whitehall Evening Post*—which published the news on the same day as the *Herald*—Gainsborough was so exacting that no compromise with him was possible.

"It is not a little to be lamented," says this journal, "that the Exhibition should be deprived of the landscape pencil of such a painter as Gainsborough; but though the misfortune may be ours the fault is his own. He is fastidious, and too tenacious of claims which probably were exorbitant. The fact was this: He sent word that pictures of such and such specific dimensions would come from him; he at the same time directed that they should all have such and such particular situations in the rooms. These directions were in part offered to be complied with. Entirely to follow them was impossible. This being communicated to Mr. Gainsborough he returned a very laconic note that the Exhibition should have none of his pictures by . . ."

The emphatic termination of this paragraph is not unlike Gainsborough in some of his moods—the mood, for example, of his letter to the Academy hangers in the preceding year. But there is evidence that Gainsborough did not write in this fashion to the Committee of 1784, and the *Whitehall Evening Post*, though cer-

tainly possessed of private information, was less accurate in its statement than the *Morning Post*, which gave the Academy version of the quarrel as Bate gave that of Gainsborough. The *Morning Post* tells its story with strict impartiality, and it agrees so well with what we know officially of the affair, that the particulars were in all probability obtained from some member of the Council of the Royal Academy.

"The public have to regret the umbrage which Mr. Gainsborough has taken at the conduct of the Council at Somerset House, as it will most probably suppress the public exhibition of the works of that eminent artist at any place. He sent six whole-length pictures subject to the disposition of the gentlemen who were appointed to arrange the different productions, with information at the same time that he was painting another canvas to contain whole-lengths of the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth, observing also that he should finish it in a style which would not appear to advantage at a greater height than five feet six inches, and therefore he desired to be indulged with such a situation, even though it might interfere with the general rule, otherwise he would not have his picture exposed. To this he was respectfully answered that a compliance with his request would break through an established plan and derange the whole Exhibition; they therefore hoped he would submit the disposition of his intended picture to the principles of the Society. The Council consists of gentlemen of the most distinguished abilities—Sir Joshua Reynolds, West, Copley, Loutherbourg, &c.—who might claim an equal right of indulgence and take occasion hereafter to think themselves offended had a precedent been established by infringing on the general institutes of the Society."

The six whole-lengths mentioned in this article are those referred to and sketched in Gainsborough's first communication to the Hanging Committee, in which he intimates his intention of sending the group of the Princesses after the King and Queen have seen it. No record exists of the letter in which the hangers "respectfully" pointed out the impossibility of complying with Gains-

borough's wishes concerning the position of the royal picture, but a copy of the painter's reply to this communication is preserved in the minute book of the Academy Council. Gainsborough sent his letter to Somerset House on the evening of the 10th of April, at which time the Council was sitting, with Sir Joshua in the chair. The other members present were Sir William Chambers, the Rev. M. W. Peters, Mr. George Dance, and Mr. Barry. The letter of withdrawal which was read to them was written in the third person :

" Mr. Gainsborough's compliments to the gentlemen of the Committee, and begs pardon for giving them so much trouble, but as he has painted the picture of the Princesses in so tender a light, that notwithstanding he approves very much of the established line for strong effects, he cannot possibly consent to have it placed higher than five feet and a half, because the likenesses and work of the picture will not be seen any higher ; therefore at a word he will not trouble the gentlemen against their inclination, but will beg the rest of his pictures back again. Saturday evening."

The reply of the Council was sent immediately :

" *Saturday evening, nine o'clock.*

" Sir,—In compliance with your request the Council have ordered your pictures to be taken down, and to be delivered to your order whenever you send for them.

" F. M. Newton, *Secretary.*"

The " established line " of which Gainsborough speaks in his letter must not be confounded with what we call the Academy line to-day. It was the rule at Somerset House to hang full-length portraits above the level of the tops of the doorways. The base of the frame of a full-length would therefore be eight or nine feet from the floor, and Gainsborough wished the Academy to break this rule for him by hanging the Princesses three feet lower. Cunningham's statement that he sent the group " with the instructions to hang it as low as the floor would allow " is absurd on the face of it. The names of

the Hanging Committee in 1784 have not, I think, been published before. They were Agostino Carlini, John Richards, Francis Milner Newton, the Rev. M. W. Peters, and George Dance the architect.

Although objecting to the undue elevation of a picture painted in tender tones for a particular position, Gainsborough, as we have seen, approved of "the established line" for strong effects; and according to Sir Martin Archer Shee he frequently forced the light and shade of his pictures for the Exhibition, and toned them down when they were returned to his studio. The practice appears to have become common, as forty years later a critic in the *Somerset House Gazette* condemns the constant exaggeration of facial effect in full-length portraits, and ascribes it entirely to the law that compelled them to be hung at the Academy high above the ordinary range of vision.

The *Morning Post*, at the end of the note from which I have recently quoted, mentioned the rumoured intention of Gainsborough and others to organise an exhibition in rivalry to the Royal Academy, and more about this interesting project was contained in an article in the *St. James's Chronicle*. The article was preceded by a letter which appears to be from the hand of ex-Governor Thicknesse, who at this time was a regular contributor to the journal in which it appeared. I give it in full, as probably reflecting to some extent the views of Gainsborough himself.

To the Printer of the "St. James's Chronicle."

SIR,—Being a lover of the arts I always visit London when the Exhibitions of the artists are opened. On my arrival on Saturday last I was much mortified to find by the public prints that thirteen or fourteen pictures from Mr. Gainsborough's pencil were withdrawn; but being unwilling to be deprived of the chief object of my journey I repaired to his house and requested a sight of them there, nor was I disappointed in any respect. I will not attempt to describe my feelings on seeing the

various talents of a man whose genius in every line that colours can shine in is so well-known, but condole with the public for the loss it has sustained either by envy, ignorance, incapacity, or obstinacy. I fear too it is not only this year's harvest of genius which is lost, but that Mr. Gainsborough will observe a line which men only of superior merit can venture to follow.

The cause of this awkward business I understand to be that the Exhibition Committee have drawn a line to which all full-length pictures are to be mounted, and consequently all judicious artists adapt their lights and shades according to the appointed line and the degree of light. But suppose the portrait of a lovely woman *of the highest rank*, whose fair complexion and tender features required the softest pencil and the lightest shades, and that infinite pains had been taken by the artist, at the request of a person of *still higher rank*, so to combine the colouring as to suit a particular destination, very different from the line drawn by the Committee. I say, suppose this to be the case, let me ask those gentlemen artists whether the line might not, nay ought not, to be broken to gratify the eye of the public, to do justice to distinguished merit, and to show respect to their *First Patron?* If not I would ask them whether they can suppose that Mr. Gainsborough's judgment could be so shut out or his vanity (if he has any) so overcome his reason as to submit to such an illiberal refusal? As the case now stands, were I to draw Mr. Gainsborough's future line it should be never more to send out *the handbills of his art.* Men of true taste know where they may see his paintings in such lights as he wishes to place them; and let those who are true judges say who can place them in *any light* (ay, there's the sting) in which they will not appear in a splendour not to be equalled by any living artist, nor to be put out of countenance by any of the ancients.—I am, Sir, yours, &c.

A Lover of the Arts.

The article which immediately follows this letter in the *St. James's Chronicle* throws a new light on the quarrel between Gainsborough and the Academy. I do not know whether the curious assertions contained in it have any foundation, but no contradiction of them was given in

the journal in which they appeared. The disputes about the hanging of Gainsborough's pictures occurred at the time when the long-drawn-out Westminster election was in progress, the election at which Fox was returned after one of the most desperate contests recorded in our political annals. Gainsborough and Reynolds were both entitled to vote, and the writer of the article attributes to political causes the friction between the painters at Somerset House.

He begins by lamenting that faction, which has caused so much misfortune to England, has been unable to keep clear of the Sciences and the Arts. Hence the frequent degradation of the Royal Society to gratify Ministerial spleen, and the ridiculous divisions which have rendered the Royal Academy on the whole a material injury and obstruction to the arts of painting and sculpture. Mr. Gainsborough, says the writer, has been for some time distinguished by the particular favour and patronage of the Prince of Wales. In the contest for Westminster he was early in his vote for Mr. Fox, "and it is *possible* from a knowledge of the prevalent passion of Sir Joshua Reynolds that he was not *wholly* unacquainted with a stratagem, the success of which will never be forgiven." The story is then told of the stratagem, the object of which was to secure by empty promises the votes of Sir Joshua and his friends for Fox. During the election a noble Lord called at Sir Joshua's house in Leicester Square to express the desire of "a certain young man" (the Prince of Wales) to take the earliest opportunity of showing his sense of the painter's merit. Sir Joshua caught eagerly at the hint, and entreated his visitor to use what influence he possessed to induce the Prince to honour the Academy with his company at the dinner which preceded the opening of the Exhibition. The noble envoy then mentioned the Prince's anxiety for the success of Mr. Fox, and said that if the President's vote and interest were given in support of his candidate, he had the

strongest hopes of obtaining a promise from his Royal Highness that he would attend the dinner. Sir Joshua with five of his friends immediately voted for Fox, and as soon as they had done so, were informed that the Prince might after all be engaged elsewhere on the night of the Academy banquet.

The Prince of Wales, as we know, was not present at the dinner of 1784, and appears to have treated with scant courtesy the President and his distinguished guests. Among those who accepted the invitation of the Royal Academy was Dr. Johnson, who ordered a new suit for the occasion, and in one of his letters to Mrs. Thrale gives some account of the proceedings. "The Prince of Wales," he says, "had promised to be there, but when we had waited an hour and a half, sent us word that he could not come."

To return to the article in the *St. James's Chronicle*, it is there stated that the story of the way in which Sir Joshua had been tricked (and as the writer suggests above, with the knowledge of Gainsborough) soon got abroad, to the amusement of the President's adversaries, and was the cause of "private ebullitions of sarcasm, ill-humour, and rancour which occasioned a secession that no doubt will be beneficial to the arts." The episode of the voting for Fox occurred during the hanging of the works at the Academy, and the writer hints that the resulting friction caused Mr. Gainsborough to be refused "an indulgence in placing some important pictures which has been generally allowed, especially to eminent artists."

Nor was the painter of the portraits of the eldest Princesses the only man who had been badly treated by the Academy. It was stated in the same article in the *St. James's Chronicle* that "Mr. Downman, who has made the most rapid progress in the art of portrait-painting of any artist we remember, and who now disputes the palm with the first painters of the age, has

had his numerous and masterly performances returned in the most insolent and contemptuous fashion. His offence was only requesting that some curious drawings might not be placed in the dark room on the ground floor at Somerset House, which Sir William Chambers contrived—after some Chinese example, we suppose—to conceal, not to exhibit the works of the artists. We are happy to learn that many of the principal artists intend to form a future exhibition in a room sufficiently large and commodious, and not built on Chinese ideas (Sir William Chambers, the designer of Somerset House, was an authority on Chinese architecture) by the architect of Somerset Place. The names of Gainsborough, Romney, Wright, Sandby, Nathaniel Dance, Downman, Gardner the portrait-painter, Cipriani, Stuart and Marlow are already mentioned. And it is not to be doubted that most, if not all the Academicians will join them, for the sake of *properly exhibiting* the effects of their genius, and of saving the company the fatigue of climbing to the very top of an ill-contrived and miserable building." Nothing came, however, of this scheme of founding a kind of eighteenth century Grosvenor or New Gallery, but Gainsborough and Wright of Derby both held private exhibitions of their own pictures.

The Westminster election, which in the above-mentioned article is said to have been connected with Gainsborough's quarrel with the Academy, was the contest in which the Duchess of Devonshire, whose charms inspired the brush of both Reynolds and Gainsborough, took part as a canvasser. There is a tradition that she bribed a butcher with a kiss to vote for her candidate, Fox, but in a circumstantial account of the incident which I discovered in a contemporary journal the Duchess is said to have kissed not one tradesman but seven, and to have kissed them as Sir Joshua voted—in vain! The correspondent who writes the account, and affirms it to be true from his own knowledge, says

that the "great lady" who was canvassing for Fox, heard that seven friends of Lord Hood, the opposition candidate, were to dine at the house of one of their number in Henrietta Street. The dinner was at three, and at half-past four, when the bottle was circulating freely among the company, the Duchess's coach drew up at the door. The fair visitor was shown in, and after having "in her easy way removed the awkwardness of the master of the house," without further ceremony placed herself at the head of the table. A toast was proposed, and drunk in Irish whisky punch, to which the Duchess was unaccustomed, and after the toast she proceeded at once to business by asking the company to vote for Mr. Fox. The tradesmen declared that they would do nothing unless they were bribed—a kiss was proposed, and the lady kissed each man in turn round the table. "And now," said the Duchess, "you will all vote for Mr. Fox to-morrow?" "Not to-morrow," replied the host, "because we have already voted for Lord Hood to-day, but we will vote for Mr. Fox at the next election." "And have I then been imposed upon?" said the indignant lady. "Have I been kissing seven dirty tradesmen for nothing?" The men, now angry in their turn, declared that they would give the kisses back and proceeded to do so, and the Duchess had a hard matter to escape into the street, where she found her carriage surrounded by a noisy and abusive mob, whose members by this time had become acquainted with the whole story of her adventure.

Against this strange story must be set a statement in another journal that the supposed Duchess who went about endeavouring to gather votes for Fox was "a painted girl with a due share of impudence for the undertaking, dressed up and put into a genteel hired equipage with a ducal coronet and a servant in livery, who assumed the name and rank of a celebrated lady, and in that manner boldly drove about the town."

In spite of Gainsborough's absence the Academy Exhibition of 1784 was regarded favourably by most of the critics, although some complained that it contained little of interest except portraits. The *Morning Post* prefaced its article on the Exhibition with an announcement of a new departure in connection with that journal's comments on the Fine Arts. "We intend in this paper," said the editor, "to give a review of the productions of the principal artists; and in order to rescue the arts from such ignorant and prejudiced accounts as have heretofore been given in the public papers we have been promised the assistance of some artists of abilities and judgment in their profession." Probably the "ignorant and prejudiced accounts" the editor had in his mind were those of Gainsborough's friend the Rev. Henry Bate, for the feeling between the *Morning Post* and the *Herald* was still bitter. No one has suspected hitherto that one of the "artists of abilities and judgment" who assisted the *Morning Post* with criticism and advice was a painter no less distinguished than John Hoppner, at this time a young man of six or seven and twenty, and not yet a member of the Royal Academy.

Sir Joshua Reynolds showed sixteen pictures at the Exhibition, some of which, according to the gossip of the day, were only sent to Somerset House to fill up the gaps caused by Gainsborough's withdrawal at the last moment. They included Sir Joshua's famous portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the *Tragic Muse*, now at Grosvenor House, and a portrait of the hero of the Westminster election, Charles James Fox, who had been sitting at Leicester Square in March. Fox's fair canvasser, the Duchess of Devonshire, was sitting at the same time to Reynolds, but her portrait, unfortunately, was not finished in time for the Exhibition. The Academy was opened on the 26th of April, but the portrait group of the three eldest Princesses remained at Somerset House until the 4th of May. It was then taken back to Gains-

borough's studio in Pall Mall, where it remained for two years or more.

Early in May, when announcing a forthcoming exhibition of Gainsborough's pictures, Bate makes a friendly reference to the conduct of Sir Joshua that appears to throw some doubt upon the remarkable story about the Westminster election, published in the *St. James's Chronicle.*

"Gainsborough," he says, "whose professional absence every visitor to the Academy so feelingly deplores, is fitting up his own saloon in Pall Mall for the display of his matchless productions, where he may safely exhibit them without further offence to the sons of envy and dulness. By-the-bye let it be remembered to the honour of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Sir William Chambers that so far from abetting the conduct of the Academy hangmen, they have in the handsomest manner protested against the shameful outrage offered by these fatal executioners to genius and taste."

Gainsborough's exhibition did not open until nearly three months after this announcement, but in the meantime Bate lost no chance of keeping his friend's name before the public. He printed some verses, nominally on the Academy but in reality eulogistic of Gainsborough:

THE EXHIBITION, 1784

Whether to Richmond, Kew or Windsor
The King and Queen resort
(Whomever they may leave behind, Sir)
Their presence makes the Court.

Thus, tho' from envy or neglect
Or by some passion heated
Th' Academists with disrespect
Our Prince of Painters treated.

He shines with splendour all his own
Nor wants their poor addition
For where his charming works are shown
They make the exhibition.

This was followed not long afterwards by a longer poem on the beauties of the portrait group of the three eldest Princesses, and in June it was stated that the Prince of

Wales, for whom the Princesses were painted, had given Gainsborough another commission for a full-length portrait of himself in Huzzar uniform. A full-length of Captain Berkeley was commenced about the same time; and the announcement of the completion of the portrait of Lord Hood, now at Ironmongers' Hall, is followed by some sarcastic comments by the editor of the *Morning Herald*, who professes to be unable to imagine why the Ironmongers should wish to perpetuate the fame of the Admiral, "unless it be that the numerous anchors he left off St. Christopher's were of general benefit to the proprietors of the cast iron founderies." Hood, it should be remembered, was opposed to the *Morning Herald* in politics, and had recently headed the poll at the election at Westminster, in which Fox occupied the second place.

It was late in the summer before Gainsborough opened at Schomberg House the exhibition of his pictures, which he had been preparing since May. Thicknesse says that of all the men he had ever known Gainsborough had least of worldly knowledge, and a proof of this want of knowledge is seen in the opening of his exhibition at the end of July, when all the fashionable people had left London. Gainsborough's exhibition has been neglected by his biographers, not one of whom, so far as I am aware, says a word about it beyond the fact that it was not prosperous. Yet it was an event of great importance, and if less successful than the painter's sanguine disposition had led him to expect, was far from being a failure. Gainsborough's gallery remained in existence until his death in 1788. It was frequently noticed from time to time in contemporary journals, and many of the painter's later works were exhibited for the first time on its walls.

However, to the exhibition of the first collection of Gainsborough's pictures, opened in the last week of July 1784, Bate alone of all the newspaper critics appears to

have been invited. He made amends for the absence of the others by writing a long and detailed description of the exhibition, which he afterwards printed in the *Morning Herald*. Gainsborough evidently gave Bate all the information in his power for this article, in which no doubt, some of the painter's own expressions have been used. The explanation about the light and shade of the group of the three eldest Princesses, its "tender effect," and how the picture should be seen, is probably Gainsborough's. He too must have explained the picture of *The Park*, or *The Mall* as we call it, and contradicted the prevailing opinion that it was inspired by Watteau. The following is Bate's description of the pictures shown at Schomberg House in July 1784. It is, I believe, the only record in existence of Gainsborough's first exhibition:

A View of Mr. Gainsborough's Gallery

The illiberality with which Mr. Gainsborough's pictures were treated by the Council who regulate the hanging of the pieces exhibited at the Royal Academy was such that, consistent with his own consequence and honour, he was under the necessity of withdrawing them from the Academy previous to the late Exhibition. They are, however, of a nature too important to the improvement of science not to merit public attention. The following summary account we trust will prove acceptable:

The Three Princesses

This picture demands our first attention. The Princess Royal is the centre figure. Her dress is of a buff colour; her Highness's waist is circled by a shawl, which, falling over one of her arms, has the appearance of a sash. Her hair is braided with pearls. The Princess Augusta is on the right hand of the Princess Royal, in a laylock dress fastened with a black girdle. The Princess Elizabeth is on the other side. She appears in blue and is represented sitting; that position being most favourable to her stature. The portraits are recommended by the strict likenesses they exhibit and

the very tender and delicate style of pencilling in which they are finished; the features have the softness and beauty of nature, at the nearest approach, with a degree of expression and character that gives animation to the whole. The limbs and other parts are rounded delightfully and sweetly to the eye; but from their being calculated for *tender effect*, should not be surveyed at a great distance. The figures are connected with the utmost harmony and skill, and the drapery finished very highly. Neither strong masses of *light* nor *shade* are to be observed in the composition, and of course the transitions are the gentler and more agreeable. The background is formed of drapery, and a landscape enriched with a beautiful sky.

Duchess of Cumberland

The Duchess is pourtrayed in her State Robes with a ducal coronet on her head. The likeness is strong. The drapery and ground is in an unfinished state.

Duke of Cumberland

The head is sketched out, but not even the outline of the figure is yet traced. (The three foregoing pictures are intended for the Prince of Wales's State Room at Carlton House.)

Lord Rodney

One of the most powerful likenesses that ever was produced by the hand of a master. The character of the original features lives in the portrait. The piece is in an unfinished state.

Lord Surrey

A performance equal to the aforementioned portrait; the head only is finished. His Lordship is to be painted in a dress of the last century.

Captain G. Berkeley

This distinguished officer is represented in his naval uniform; one of his hands, in which he has his hanger, is extended in the act of waving a boat to the shore. The attitude is bold and the countenance animated.

Lord Rawdon

A characteristic portrait of his Lordship painted in his military dress and possessing every requisite of a good picture.

Lord Buckingham

His Lordship is represented in his Regal Portrait Robes as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. The likeness is strong. The drapery is finished in a rich style and well disposed.

Lady Buckingham

The companion to the foregoing. An admirable portrait, in which her Ladyship has called forth all the powers of Mr. Gainsborough.

Mrs. Douglas

This lady is represented reclining. An air of sensibility and solitude is diffused over her countenance.

To the foregoing list of full-length portraits may be subjoined the following of half-lengths and three-quarters :

Mr. Methuen.	Lord Stopford.
Mrs. Crofts.	Lord Cathcart.
Mrs. Dixon.	Mr. Loundes.
Mrs. Vane.	Mrs. Fisher.
Lord Harrington.	Mr. Howard.
Lord Hood.	Dr. Warren.

The Beggars

This picture consists of an elegant building, in one of the approaches to which is an ascent of steps, and at a distance an arch through which a loaded mule is passing. The principal objects are a beggar woman, who is receiving relief from a servant belonging to the house. The beggar has an infant in her arms and one on her back, and is also surrounded by others, some of whom appear terrified at a dog who will not suffer their approach to the house. Two children on the steps of the door are represented making observations on the circumstance.

THE MALL, ST. JAMES'S PARK

A very fine summer sky is introduced. A vine is represented against the side of the house; several pigeons, also, are descried fluttering about the building. The whole of which forms a beautiful assemblage of an interesting nature.

The Park

Some have attributed this piece to be after the manner of a distinguished master of the Flemish school; but the imitation being strictly from nature and the style of colouring possessing every originality, such a definition is without propriety. The view, although not taken from St. James's Park, will perfectly well apply to that resort of gaiety, and strikes a spectator as though the objects were surveyed from Buckingham House; and a view of the Green Park was included. The Mall appears full of company, broken in parties of five, three, and two, to give diversity to the scene. Among these are all descriptions of characters—women of fashion, women of frolic, military beaux, and *petit maîtres*, with a grave keeper or two, and a few accidental stragglers to illustrate the representation. Looks of characteristic signification appear to be mutually exchanged by some of the group in passing; and others on the benches appear making their comments. Some deer in the distance, and other objects fill up the scene. The foliage of the trees is well executed, and the sky is as clear and unclouded as possible, to give the verdure of the boughs proper relief.

Landscape

This picture is, we understand, painted for the Prince of Wales. The scene is an upland and valley. Sheep, water, trees, broken ground, and other objects are seen; a solitary gloom diversifies a part of it, so as to awaken corresponding ideas in the mind. The force of language seems to fail in our efforts to give praise to Mr. Gainsborough, who in every province of the pencil discovers a genius stored with fine fancy and excellent harmony; and whether he gives a Shepherd Boy in humble weeds or a Prince in military pomp, a woodland scene, or a prospect of the ocean, his labours are attended with equal success!

Gainsborough's group of the *Three Eldest Princesses* was the principal attraction at this exhibition, on account of its subject and because of the notoriety that attached to it in connection with the recent quarrels at the Royal Academy. The picture still exists, but in a sadly mutilated condition. Painted for the Prince of Wales, it was added to the royal collection of pictures after leaving Gainsborough's studio, and was at one time in the charge of some ignorant official who cut off a large part of the lower half of the canvas to make the remainder fit into a space above a doorway. This portrait group of the Princesses was perhaps the " fine whole-length by Gainsborough " which Landseer saw in the act of being cut down when he was at Windsor early in the reign of Queen Victoria. He complained at once to the Queen, but it was too late, and he understood that the Inspector of Palaces who had mutilated the Gainsborough had burnt the severed portion. Lord Ronald Gower, in his life of Gainsborough, argues that the picture has not been cut down and is still in its original condition, but this idea is evidently erroneous. As the canvas is now the composition is absurd, with the head of Princess Elizabeth (the seated figure) low down in the right-hand corner; and that the picture was originally a full-length is proved beyond dispute by the pen-and-ink sketch that Gainsborough sent to the Hanging Committee of the Royal Academy.

The portraits described as those of Lord and Lady Buckingham represented the Earl and Countess of Buckinghamshire. John Hobart, Earl of Buckingham shire, was a diplomatist who had been British Ambassador to the Court of St. Petersburg, and he had also acted as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Horace Walpole, who seems to have liked him, though he had no great opinion of his powers, nicknamed him " the clearcake; fat, fair, sweet, and seen through in a moment." He has often been confounded with his contemporary the Marquis of

Buckingham, who was also a sitter to Gainsborough. The Earl of Buckinghamshire used to sign himself "Buckingham" until the creation of the Buckingham Marquisate, and the confusion was made worse by the fact that each Peer had been to Ireland as Lord-Lieutenant. Lord Cathcart, long afterwards commander-in-chief of the expedition to Copenhagen, was the brother of the beautiful Mrs. Graham whose portrait Gainsborough exhibited in 1777. To the unfinished portrait of Lord Surrey (afterwards Duke of Norfolk) I shall have occasion to refer again, as well as to that of Lord Rodney. The portrait of the lady described as "reclining" is probably the *Mrs. John Douglas* which was lent by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild to the Academy Old Masters Exhibition in 1874.

It is evident from the notes on *The Park*, as *The Mall* was called at this time, that none of the figures represent members of the Royal Family, as Fulcher believed. A more reasonable account of their origin is that given by William Jackson of Exeter, who says that "all the female figures in his Park-scene Gainsborough drew from a doll of his own creation." William Collins, R.A., the father of Wilkie Collins, who owned Gainsborough's painting-table, also possessed a little model of a woman "dressed by the great painter's hand," and this may have been the identical doll referred to by Jackson.

Allan Ramsay's death in August 1784 made vacant the post of principal Portrait Painter to the King, and Bate lost no time in urging that the appointment should be bestowed upon Gainsborough. There was no one, he declared, with equal pretensions. "No artist imitates Nature with such softness, truth, and expression. No artist living has so much originality or so strong a claim as far as genius is concerned, on the Patron of Science." Gainsborough, who had painted all the Royal Family except the Duke of York, and had executed numerous royal commissions, must have felt that he had a better

claim to the post than any other artist, but his hopes, whatever they may have been, were soon destroyed by the appointment of Sir Joshua Reynolds as Portrait Painter to his Majesty. Gainsborough, however, was not wanting in royal commissions, and the Prince of Wales sat several times in the late autumn for the portrait in the Hussar uniform, which was in an advanced state by the beginning of December.

Gainsborough, who often found the models for his pictures of children by chance in the streets or fields, was walking near his house one day at the close of this year when he was accosted by a beggar woman, who was accompanied by a little boy of singular beauty. The painter, noticing the child, gave the woman some money and asked her to call upon him in Pall Mall on the following day and bring her charge with her. She came, and Gainsborough had the child washed and dressed and was so impressed by his appearance that he offered to take entire charge of him from that time forth. The woman, who proved to be the boy's mother, asked for a few days to consider the matter. At the end of that time she returned and told Gainsborough that she could not part with her child; not, it appears, on account of parental affection, but because during the preceding twelve months he had earned by begging about seven shillings a day.

The *Morning Post* published at the end of this year an article on Gainsborough and Reynolds which is worth quoting as a piece of contemporary opinion, and also because Hoppner was one of the critics attached to the journal in which the article appeared. It is a comparison of the two men as portrait painters, and the writer is imagining the result of sittings given to both artists by the Duchess of Devonshire:

"Sir Joshua's portrait would not need the regalia of nobility to point her out a Duchess. He would give her understanding, grace, and everything but beauty;

but this he does not see in any person to the degree with which he feels their other qualities. Gainsborough with great ability, in the honest bluntness of his heart beholds her with all her imperfections on her head, and paints her as he sees her. As it has ever been his endeavour to catch strong likenesses, so are his eyes perhaps less directed by the influence of his mind, which has not made him wander in search of ideal beauties to gloss over the imperfections of nature. It would be ridiculous to pass my judgment upon a subject which, as I have mentioned, no two people think alike upon, yet I am tempted to think that Gainsborough sees with more truth than any of his contemporaries."

It is impossible to say whether Hoppner wrote this particular article for the *Morning Post*, but years afterwards he gave, in the *Quarterly Review*, an estimate of the qualities of the two artists, which bears some resemblance to the opinion expressed above. Speaking of Gainsborough and Reynolds, Hoppner said: "The aim, as well as the power, of these distinguished painters was different, and while the first was content to represent the body it was the ambition of the latter to express the mind."

CHAPTER XIII

LONDON, 1785

Lord Rodney and the bantam—A new landscape—The Prince of Wales and Coke of Norfolk—Mrs. Siddons—Her portrait completed—The thirsty Speaker—Gainsborough paints the *Beggar Boys*—Another full length of Mrs. Sheridan—Gainsborough and the Academy—Rumours of reconciliation—The *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*—Sold to Sir Francis Basset—Portraits painted of Lord Malden, Madame St. Alban, Admiral Graves, and Lord Mulgrave—Gainsborough's palette—Asphaltum—Brushes—Paints in dim light—Copies a Velasquez—A companion to *The Mall*—The *Cottage Children with the Ass*—Gainsborough's house at Richmond.

THE notes in the *Morning Herald* are very valuable in 1785, as they give the dates, hitherto unknown, of several of Gainsborough's portraits and pictures, including the *Mrs. Siddons* now in the National Gallery and the famous *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher.*

Early in January Mr. Beaufoy was sitting in Pall Mall for a full-length of the exact proportions of the portrait of his wife which had been exhibited at the Royal Academy five years earlier—the portrait that is now in the possession of Mr. Alfred de Rothschild. Mr. Beaufoy's portrait was nearly finished by the end of January, and considerable progress was made in the same month with the full-length of Lord Rodney, which, in a sketchy state, had been shown in Gainsborough's gallery in 1784. The figure of the Admiral was almost completed, but much remained to be done to the background of the portrait. Bate says: "His Lordship's attitude is full of spirit, and the likeness has the animation of nature. He is represented on the quarter-deck of the *Formidable*, and near him a bantam-cock is introduced, from the circum-

stance of one of those fowls having continued crowing from the beginning to the end of the action of the 12th of April." This was the great victory of 1782, when Rodney captured five French ships of the line and sent the admiral of the defeated squadron, the Count de Grasse, prisoner to England.

In the intervals between the painting of these portraits Gainsborough completed another landscape, which was declared by his admirers to place at a distance all his earlier works of the same kind, and even surpassed the picture of the *Woodman* at Mistley Hall. This picture showed a farm cart returning from market in the evening, with figures "finished in the highest style of pencilling." The *Woodman* mentioned in connection with it was not the *Woodman* afterwards purchased by the Earl of Gainsborough. It was an earlier work, one of two or three pictures known by the same title, and once belonged to Giardini the violinist. At the time Bate wrote about it the *Woodman* had passed from the hands of Giardini into those of Mr. Rigby, the hard-drinking Paymaster of the Forces, at whose house at Mistley, in Essex, Sir Joshua Reynolds was a not infrequent visitor.

One of the commissions accepted by Gainsborough early in 1785 was to paint an equestrian portrait of the Prince of Wales. The commission was given by Mr. Thomas Coke of Norfolk, the eminent agriculturist, afterwards created Earl of Leicester. He was at this time on intimate terms with the Prince of Wales, who promised that he would sit for the portrait, which was intended to hang at Holkham as a pendant to the equestrian portrait of the Duc d'Aremberg by Vandyke in Mr. Coke's possession. Of the Prince's portrait, as of the landscape mentioned above, I shall have occasion to speak again.

Gainsborough, however, when he accepted Mr. Coke's commission, was painting the portrait of a far more

attractive and interesting personality than the heir to the throne. Sir Joshua had shown at the recent Exhibition of the Royal Academy his portrait of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse, the work that Lawrence described as the finest female portrait in the world, and this was now to be challenged by the President's rival. Mrs. Siddons was sitting to Gainsborough in March, and her portrait was in a forward state by the middle of the month and finished before its close. Bate, who had known Mrs. Siddons since the days when he went to see her at Cheltenham as the envoy of Garrick, says of the just completed portrait which he had seen in Gainsborough's studio: "The resemblance is admirable, and the features are without that theatrical distortion which several painters have been fond of delineating. In addition to the great force and likeness which the portrait possesses, the new style of the drapery may be mentioned. Mrs. Siddons's dress is particularly *novelle*, and the fur round her cloak and fox-skin muff are most happy imitations of nature."

The portrait thus described is the one in the National Gallery, where it has been hanging since 1862, when the trustees were fortunate enough to purchase it for a thousand pounds from Major Mair, the husband of one of the grand-daughters of the actress. According to Fanny Kemble, who was a niece of Mrs. Siddons, the portrait, charming as it appears to us, is not in its original condition. She says of this work of Gainsborough's, which for many years adorned her father's house: "The restoration of that beautiful painting has destroyed the delicate charm of its colouring, which was perfectly harmonious, and has as far as possible made it coarse and vulgar; before it had been spoiled not even Sir Joshua's *Tragic Muse* seemed to me so noble and beautiful a representation of my aunt's beauty as that divine picture of Gainsborough's." That the portrait is like the original there is other evidence besides that of

MRS. SIDDONS

National Gallery

Bate and Fanny Kemble. Mrs. Jameson, the intimate friend of Fanny Kemble, wrote of this portrait of Mrs. Siddons: "Two years before her death I remember seeing her when seated near this picture, and looking from one to the other it was like her still at the age of seventy." With Sir Joshua's portrait—considering it as a likeness—contemporary critics were less pleased, and Northcote thought the President had not done Mrs. Siddons justice in the *Tragic Muse*.

Gainsborough's portrait of Mrs. Siddons was not painted for her, as some have supposed. It was painted for sale, and remained for a long time in Gainsborough's gallery awaiting a purchaser. More than a year after it was finished, a critic, who had just returned from visiting the studio at Schomberg House, remarks that "the unpurchased portrait of Mrs. Siddons—with all the graces of private station—still adorns the ante-room, and will adorn it for some time, we fear, so prevalent is the striking form of action and of character over the mild and unimpassioned deportment of private life." However, it could not have been the "private" nature of the portrait of Mrs. Siddons that prevented it from being sold, for Reynolds found the same difficulty in disposing of his *Tragic Muse*. Long after it was shown at the Academy Bate described it as still remaining on the President's hands, and added, with a mischievous reminder of the fleeting hues of Sir Joshua's pictures, that it would soon arrive at that period when it would, like all his best subjects, "come off with flying colours."

Sir Wolfran Cornwall, the dignified but self-indulgent Speaker of the House of Commons, sat in April, when Gainsborough painted him full-length and wearing his robes of office. The Speaker was a thirsty soul who constantly imbibed malt liquor from a pewter pot while engaged in his duties, and frequently slumbered during a lengthy sitting. His fruitless efforts to keep awake are satirised in some amusing lines in *The Rolliad*.

"Like sad Prometheus fastened to the rock
In vain he looks for pity to the clock;
In vain the powers of strengthening porter tries
And nods to Bellamy for fresh supplies."

Gainsborough evidently managed to keep Sir Wolfran awake, for his portrait of the Speaker is praised by contemporaries for its living and alert aspect. Young Lord Darnley's portrait was completed in this month; at the end of which the beautiful painting of Lady Sheffield (now in Miss Alice de Rothschild's collection) was "daily awakening into perfection, with all the external grace and elegance of nature." To the Spring of 1785 also belongs the picture of the *Beggar Boys*, of which the Duke of Newcastle is the present owner. The boys were painted from the model who sat for the much-admired work, *A Shepherd*, which had been shown at the Academy four years earlier. The model was apparently a street urchin picked up by Gainsborough in the neighbourhood of his house, as one of the critics of 1781 mentioned the *Shepherd* half scornfully as a picture of a beggar boy of St. James's Street. Yet another important work of this extraordinarily prolific springtime was the portrait of Mrs. Sheridan, to which I have already referred when speaking of the earlier version exhibited in 1783. Of the one of 1785 a critic writes "Mr. Gainsborough is engaged on a portrait of Mrs. Sheridan. It is a full-length. She is painted under the umbrage of a romantic tree, and the accompanying objects are descriptive of retirement. The likeness is powerful, and is enforced by a characteristic expression which equals the animation of nature." This portrait of 1785 must be, I think, Lord Rothschild's, as in another note, referring to the same picture, Mrs. Sheridan is described as "resting under the trees."

As the day for the opening of the Royal Academy approached public curiosity became excited as to whether Gainsborough would maintain his proud and unrelenting

attitude towards Somerset House. Paragraphs dealing with the subject appeared in most of the journals, but they were as a rule purely speculative. "We are informed by an artist of eminence," said one of the evening papers, "that the Exhibition at Somerset House will be far superior to anything the public may expect unaided by the productions of the excellent Gainsborough. Though from the same authority we understand that such reciprocal overtures have been made between that artist and the Royal Academicians as may restore to their collection the excellent efforts of his astonishing genius." This led to inquiries on the part of the *Public Advertiser*, which for some reason showed special interest in the matter, but was obliged to admit that it was unable to discover whether or not the difference between the dignitaries of the Academy had been compromised. However the same journal, a fortnight before the opening of the Academy, ventured to announce a reconciliation. "Gainsborough, not so fastidious and unreasonable as last year, no longer holds aloof, and—of course, if they are well finished—the art will be enriched with an admirable landscape or two, his very curious picture of the Park, and some portraits, as of the Siddons, Mrs. Sheridan sitting in a wood, the young Lord Darnley, &c." But all this time the *Morning Herald*—the only newspaper that enjoyed the confidence of Gainsborough—was silent as to his intentions concerning the Academy, and when the Exhibition opened its doors it was found that the *Public Advertiser* had been mistaken and that reconciliation was as far off as ever.

Gainsborough's obstinacy was regretted by most of the critics, although the *Morning Post* declared that his absence and that of Romney were not felt so much as the non-appearance of Wright of Derby! The same paper considered that the Exhibition contained less rubbish than that of 1784, "which was a disgrace to the Academic ground," but critics disagreed in those days

as in our own, and the *General Advertiser* had nothing good to say of Somerset House.

"It is an old saying," wrote a correspondent of this journal, "and often happens to be the fact, that 'what everybody says must be true,' and it is verified of the pictures at Somerset House, which are confessedly allowed, in the *tout ensemble*, to be the worst collection that ever disgraced the walls of the Academy. To partiality in the direction—to open affronts given to men of genius—to the total absence of Gainsborough, of Wright, of Romney, who are disgusted with the Government in the Academy—this melancholy appearance of decline is partly owing. In vain does Sir Joshua raise from obscurity pictures which he has long since finished, in vain does he cover the walls with his own paintings; for certain it is that the Royal Academy must in a few years be totally deserted by men of merit unless some step is taken to recall the absentees and to cherish genius wherever it is to be found. Much allowance, no doubt, is to be made for the necessity of the case, and pictures, it is allowed, have been admitted which would have been rejected in former times on account of vacancies which must otherwise have appeared on many parts of the wall of the Great Room. Many of our readers may think us severe in our criticism, but if they look to the cause with attention they will find that the effect is natural and just."

The *Public Advertiser*, perhaps sore about its misstatement concerning the Academy and Gainsborough, bestows a sarcastic comment on that artist in a paragraph of general reproach to the Somerset House absentees. "Of Romney panegyric—though due to him next to Reynolds—cannot enter here. He chances to be what Gainsborough (of no moment but for his landscapes and his oddities) perversely chooses to be—no public contributor to the support of his sustaining art."

Sir Joshua sent sixteen pictures to the Academy in 1785, including a portrait of the Prince of Wales, which Bate declared had been altered at his suggestion just before it was sent to Somerset House. He said that when

the portrait stood in Sir Joshua's gallery its drapery consisted of a scarlet greatcoat, but that this was changed to a "close" dress owing to a hint given by him, and that the change was without doubt an improvement. The President was severely criticised in more journals than one for hanging in a prominent place in the Academy a full-length portrait of the notorious Mrs. Smith, who afterwards married Sir John Lade, a nephew of Dr. Johnson's friend Thrale, the brewer. The portrait of Mrs. Smith, who, as Lady Lade, figures in one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's romances, was the subject of frequent comments while it remained at Somerset House. Its close proximity to a religious picture by West called forth many comparisons of an irreverent nature, and the vulgarity of the lady's appearance was remarked with painful frankness.

Meanwhile Gainsborough, unaffected by the storms that raged in and around the Academy, was at work upon a picture which, in the opinion of those who saw it in progress, promised to rank with the best of the pastoral subjects he had already produced. The picture was the *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*, the date of which has been until now a matter of dispute. Some writers on Gainsborough have assigned this work to his Bath period (1759–1774), but a contemporary note shows that it was painted in the spring of 1785.

"The pencil of Mr. Gainsborough is at present occupied on a subject which promises to rival his *Shepherd Boy;* it is a young peasant girl on her way to a brook to fetch water. Under one of her arms a little dog is borne; the position of the animal is extremely natural and pleasing. A cottage is shown in the distance, and a charming landscape, with sheep and pastoral objects, fill the expanse."

The *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher* was finished in the last days of May 1785, and sold a week or two later for two hundred guineas to Sir Francis Basset (after-

wards Lord de Dunstanville). It is still in the possession of the Basset family. This picture was exhibited with a large number of other works by Gainsborough at the British Institution in 1814, and was seen there by C. R. Leslie, R.A., who says in his *Handbook for Young Painters :*

" Gainsborough's barefoot child on her way to the well, with her little dog under her arm, is unequalled by anything of the kind in the world. I recollect it at the British Gallery, forming part of a very noble assemblage of pictures, and I could scarcely look at or think of anything else in the rooms. This inimitable work is a portrait, and not of a peasant child but a young lady, who appears also in his picture of the girl with pigs which Sir Joshua purchased."

Leslie's opinion of the beauty of this work has been endorsed generally by most of the painters who have followed him ; but Hazlitt, who also saw the picture at the British Institution, criticised it with some severity. He admitted that the *Girl going to the Well,* as it is described in the catalogue of 1814, was the general favourite ; and the attitude of the girl impressed him as being perfectly easy and natural. " But there is a consciousness in the turn of the head, and a sentimental pensiveness in the expression which is not taken from nature, but intended as an improvement on it ! There is a regular insipidity, a systematic vacancy, a round, unvaried smoothness to which real nature is a stranger, and which is only an idea existing in the painter's mind." Of what he calls Gainsborough's " fancy pictures," Hazlitt preferred the *Cottage Children.* This is the work in the collection of Lord Carnarvon, now known as the *Wood Gatherers,* and painted, as I shall show later, in 1787.

Leslie, in his remarks quoted above, says that it was a young lady and not a peasant child who sat for the figure both in the *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher* and the *Girl with Pigs.* Apparently this is a mistake, as

Bate says definitely that the *Cottage Girl* was a young peasant, and that Gainsborough made her acquaintance near Richmond Hill, where he met her carrying under her arm the puppy which he painted with her in 1785. The same girl could not, therefore, have sat for the picture purchased by Sir Joshua, which was painted more than three years earlier.

Among the sitters at Schomberg House in June 1785 were Lord Malden, afterwards the fifth Earl of Essex, who appears at this time to have enjoyed an uncommon reputation for rakishness; and Madame St. Alban. "Lord Malden is at this time sitting to Mr. Gainsborough for his portrait, that when the Ladies of Cypria next lose their favourite they may console themselves with his picture, and contemplate the copy when he is far away." Lord Malden, a few years previously, had been connected with the affairs of another sitter of Gainsborough's, the beautiful Perdita Robinson. If some of the memoirs of that lady are to be trusted it was Lord Malden, "young, pleasing, and perfectly accomplished," who was the intermediary when Perdita's intrigue began with the Prince of Wales, and was present at the first romantic interview of the two on the river-bank near Kew Palace.

Madame St. Alban may have been the lady who had already sat to Gainsborough in 1778 and 1782, the notorious Mrs. Elliott (Miss Dalrymple). Walpole speaks of her as afterwards known by the name of St. Alban. However, the tactful editor of the *Morning Herald* makes no reference to the past of Madame St. Alban, whom he mentions politely as "a successful cruiser on the Cyprian coast," so successful, indeed, that she displayed in her jewels "a splendour that might almost rival that of the Emperor of the East, for each hand aches with the treasure it carries. Large bracelets consisting of an enamelled azure ground studded over with brilliants—a miniature of the starry heavens, and bounded with an horizon of diamonds, with oval rings made of

similar materials at every joint." Bate approves of her taste in jewels, but protests against her pushing her conquests under false colours—with enamel on her face an inch thick. Madame St. Alban was one of the many painted ladies whose charms Gainsborough depicted. She is described, while sitting to him, as surveying with a triumphant air the portrait of the toe-poised Bacelli which was then hanging in the studio of the artist. The Bacelli—as thickly enamelled as Madame St. Alban herself—was the Italian dancer already referred to as pirouetting on the stage of the Paris Opera House while wearing the Garter ribbon of the British Ambassador, the Duke of Dorset. Her portrait was shown at the Academy of 1782, and it is curious that it should still be in Gainsborough's studio three years afterwards. Presumably the Duke of Dorset paid for it, as he did for the portrait of the same lady by Reynolds, for it is hardly likely that Gainsborough would paint a whole-length of the Bacelli for friendship's sake, or as a speculation in the hope of selling it, as he did that of Mrs. Siddons. The portrait was perhaps temporarily in his studio to retouch or varnish.

During the summer two portraits by Gainsborough were placed in public buildings in the City. That of the Duke of Northumberland, shown wearing his Garter robes, was hung in the principal room of the newly built Hicks' Hall (the Sessions House of the County of Middlesex), and that of Lord Hood, painted in the preceding year, in the Ironmongers' Hall, where it still remains.

August witnessed the completion of the portraits of two eminent seamen, Admiral Graves and Lord Mulgrave. Of the first Bate says: "It is an excellent portrait of that unaffected officer, whose professional merit has suffered somewhat by detraction, but who will long be revered by a body of the navy of the first respect, to whom his worth is known." Admiral Graves, who had fought under Anson and Rodney, brought back a squadron,

chiefly of prizes, after Rodney's victory in April 1782, and lost his own ship, the *Ramilies*, on the voyage. His proceedings had been the subject of some criticism, but a few years later he distinguished himself by leading the van of Lord Howe's fleet in the action of June 1, 1794, and was raised to the peerage as Lord Graves. Lord Mulgrave was an eminent Arctic explorer as well as the friend of all the wits and men of learning of his day. He figures in one of Sir Joshua's portrait groups of the members of the Dilettanti Society.

When the portraits of the two sailors were being painted it was promised in the *Morning Herald* that "The Stanzas on the Palette belonging to the celebrated Mr. Gainsborough" should appear in a few days, but something appears to have prevented the publication of the stanzas, as they are not to be found in the columns of Bate's journal. The omission is unfortunate, for they might have thrown some light upon the composition of a palette about which there is no information that can be relied upon. All that is known on the subject is to be found in the recollections of the Rev. Mr. Trimmer, a son of the clergyman who was the acquaintance of Turner, and a descendant of Joshua Kirby, Gainsborough's Ipswich friend. Mr. Trimmer knew Mr. Briggs, a young artist, who was the near neighbour of Gainsborough's daughter Margaret in the later years of her life, and obtained from her several works from the hand of the great painter.

Mr. Trimmer, who gave considerable information about Turner to Thornbury for his biography of the landscape painter, also sent him some notes about Gainsborough, and says of his palette:

"This I had from Mr. Briggs, but have lost it; still, as I have copied several Gainsboroughs, I think I can furnish you with it. Yellows: yellow-ochre, Naples yellow, yellow lake, and for his high lights (but very seldom) some brighter yellow, probably a preparation of orpiment, raw sienna;

Reds: vermilion, light red, Venetian, and the lakes; Browns: burnt sienna, cologne earth (this he used very freely, and brown pink the same). He used a great deal of terre verte, which he mixed with his blues, generally with ultramarine. Latterly he used Cremona white; this he purchased of Scott in the Strand, who on retiring from business gave me what remained. It was the purest white I ever used, and accounts for the purity of Gainsborough's carnations."

Of Mr. Trimmer's notes those about the Cremona white are interesting, as the writer obtained his information from Scott, who was perhaps the John Scott who was in business in 1797 as a "water-colour preparer" at 417 Strand, and who appears to have been one of the colourmen with whom Gainsborough dealt when he lived in London. But the particulars about the palette cannot be accepted unreservedly. Mr. Trimmer, who "thought" he could remember them, had them from Briggs, who must have obtained his information from Margaret Gainsborough, and it is not unlikely that some of the colours may have been forgotten or varied when passed on from one to another. It is known from Gainsborough's correspondence with Jackson of Exeter that he used indigo when at Bath—perhaps experimentally, for every artist seems to have been an experimentalist with pigments and mediums at that time. One of the earlier Royal Academicians, Richard Yeo, used even to manufacture colours on a small scale. Gainsborough, who painted simply and directly, probably experimented less than most, although he must have varied his palette and method of painting occasionally. Field in his *Chromatography* speaks of Gainsborough having at one time painted his flesh with red and green alone, but does not say whence he derived this information.

Asphaltum is believed to have been a favourite pigment of Gainsborough's, and according to the writer of an interesting article on colours and varnishes, published

in the *Art Union* more than seventy years ago, he boasted that with its help he could paint a pit "as deep as the infernal regions." His fondness for this fascinating, but in modern hands dangerous, pigment is emphasized by the appearance in a list of artist's colours issued a few years after his death, of "Gainsborough's Essence of Asphaltum," which is quoted immediately after "Vandyke's Brown."

We know as little about Gainsborough's tools and methods of painting as we do of his pigments, but if his daughter's memory may be trusted her father worked with paint so thin and liquid that his palette ran over unless he kept it on the level. It is generally agreed that he used very long brushes, and "Nollekens" Smith who saw him at work, says: "I was much surprised to see him sometimes paint portraits with pencils on sticks full six feet in length, and his method of using them was this: he placed himself and his canvas at a right angle with the sitter, so that he stood still and touched the features of his picture exactly at the same distance at which he viewed his sitter." The anonymous biographer of the *Morning Chronicle*, who knew the painter, excuses his supposed want of finish by saying that he worked with a very long and broad brush. Another contemporary, John Williams (Pasquin), in a biographical note declares that Gainsborough always prided himself upon using longer and broader tools than other men, and upon standing farther from his canvas when at work. That he always stood to paint we know from Thicknesse, but it is obvious that all his work could not have been done with broad tools of hoghair. Probably he used camel-hair brushes sometimes, as did Gainsborough Dupont, who inherited his uncle's implements and colours, and in painting followed his manner exactly. Dupont left behind him, in addition to a great quantity of hogtools, "twelve bundles of camel's hair pencils."

Fulcher says that when Gainsborough's sitters left

him it was his custom to close the shutter, in which was a small circular aperture, the only access for light, and by this subdued illumination work on his picture and get rid of superfluous detail. No authority is given for this statement, but there can be little doubt that Gainsborough loved to subdue the light in his painting-room. Williams says that it was sometimes subdued to such an extent that objects were barely visible. "Yet," he adds, in a contemptuous reference to Gainsborough's portraits, "of what importance, after all, is any affectation of and singularity of manner if that medium is not productive of excellence. . . . I think if his portraits involved the perishable qualities imputable to those of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that their fading into nothingness would not be so injurious to his memory as their preservation. His portraits of ladies are all over-vermillioned on the cheeks, so as to look like varnished puppets." This bitter and unjust criticism of Gainsborough was no doubt inspired by the bad feeling that existed between Williams and Bate. Williams, some years before writing this criticism, had been connected with the *Morning Herald*, but left that journal after a sudden and violent quarrel with its editor, who, as he well knew, had been Gainsborough's intimate friend and most devoted admirer.

If we know little of Gainsborough's painting materials, we know less of the sources from whence they were obtained, and with the exception of Mr. Trimmer's reference to "Scott of the Strand," I am not aware of any mention of a colourman with whom Gainsborough had dealings. Richard Wilson patronised Newman's, a firm that is still flourishing, now of Soho Square, but then of Gerrard Street. Gainsborough perhaps was also among the painters who dealt there, but Messrs. Newman's eighteenth-century ledgers and account-books were destroyed when they moved to Soho Square in 1800, and no record remains of their earlier transactions. An-

other colourman who enjoyed a large connection among the artists of Gainsborough's time, and afterwards supplied Turner and Raeburn with some of their materials, was Middleton of St. Martin's Lane.

Gainsborough amused himself in the autumn of 1785 by copying a picture, a task that he could accomplish with extraordinary success if he were in sympathy with the painter of the original. Sir Joshua himself admitted that he had been obliged to examine for a long time a copy by Gainsborough of a Vandyke before he could decide if it were an imitation or an original. But, he said, it was not often that there was any occasion for doubt, as very few who could paint such originals as Gainsborough ever employed their time in copying. The picture copied in 1785 was a Velasquez, then known as *The Conspirators*, which Lord Grantham had acquired some years earlier in Madrid, when he was Ambassador to the Spanish Court. Gainsborough's copy of this picture was so faithful to the manner and spirit of Velasquez that the Spanish Ambassador to England, who saw it at Schomberg House, wished to buy it. However, Gainsborough would not part with his copy, and it remained in his possession until his death, when his wife was unable to find a purchaser for it at the price she asked, eighty guineas.

Lord Grantham's Velasquez, which is not an especially notable example of that master, is now the property of Lord Lucas, and was lent by him to the exhibition of Spanish Old Masters held in 1913 at the Grafton Galleries, where it was catalogued as *A Conversation of Spaniards*, No. 66. The picture, rather more than three feet in length, shows an archway in a ruined building, beneath which four men are grouped, talking together. One of them wears a cloak of bright scarlet. At the British Institution, to which it was lent in 1808, the Velasquez was known as *Four Men under a Gateway*, and described as " a picture said to have been particularly

a favourite with Gainsborough." Velasquez appears to have been much admired by Gainsborough who, according to Northcote, was anxious to purchase the portrait of Don Balthasar on horseback, now at Dulwich, but could not afford the sum demanded.

Three portraits of one of the judges, Baron Skinner, were commenced by Gainsborough in October. In the same month he was offered an interesting commission—to paint a companion of his beautiful, but still unsold, picture of *The Mall.* All the figures in it were to be portraits, probably of Royalties, as the commission came from Buckingham House; and the landscape in the background was to represent "Richmond water-walk, or Windsor." Of this picture, the idea of which was so promising, I have found no further mention, and apparently the commission was not executed.

In November, the child who sat earlier in the year for the beautiful *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher,* was painted again as the principal figure in another pastoral picture, the *Cottage Children with the Ass,* or, as it is sometimes called, *Rustic Amusement.* This picture, which was finished before Christmas, we know now only by the engraving, and Bate's description of it is therefore worth quoting. He writes in the middle of December:

"Mr. Gainsborough's picture of the Peasant Girl and Boy has received the last touches of that master. The figures are brought pretty forward in the scene, and explain the subject with great perspicuity. The girl appears to have been sent from a distant cottage with her little brother to gather firewood at the entrance to a grove, but meeting with a young ass the girl seats her brother on it. The boy seems pleased, yet terrified at his situation, and the action of his right hand at the side of his head adds force to the expression of his countenance. They are painted in tattered drapery that well accords with rustic penury, and on that account the picture has greater value. The ass appears alive, and the other materials, such as decayed trees, foliage, grass,

&c., in the foreground are coloured with the utmost force and spirit. The scene extends to the horizon of a wild country. A cottage, water, and other natural objects are disposed in the landscape, and the prospect is terminated by remote hills. A beautiful sky, variegated with light and tender clouds, completes the harmony of this admirable piece."

To the subsequent history of the *Cottage Children with the Ass*, and to its unfortunate destruction, I shall refer in another chapter.

In one of Bate's notes on this picture he says that the little boy and girl shown in it were the tenants of a cottage near Richmond, "where Mr. Gainsborough has a house." The locality in which Gainsborough spent his summers, and his days of recreation generally in his London period, was Hampstead, according to Cunningham; and Sir Walter Armstrong states that he had a house on Kew Green. For Cunningham's statement I can find no sufficient authority; and that of Sir Walter Armstrong is apparently based on the facts that Gainsborough dated a letter from Kew Green, and that he was buried in Kew Churchyard. "Presumably," says Sir Walter, "he would not have been buried in Kew Churchyard had he not possessed some sort of domicile in the parish." Gainsborough's interment at Kew was, of course, due to the fact that he wished to lie beside Kirby; and the letter to Mr. Pearce headed "Kew Green, Sunday morning—Church Time," in which he announces his intention of visiting the Lakes, was probably written at the house of his sister. Lysons, whose *Environs of London* was published soon after Gainsborough's death, in dealing with Kew and its churchyard describes the painter's tomb, and adds: "Mr. Gainsborough never resided at Kew except on occasional visits to his sister."

Gainsborough's country house was, as Bate says, at Richmond, and situated, oddly enough, close to that of Sir Joshua Reynolds. I do not know how long

Gainsborough lived at Richmond, but certainly for some years, as the house was still in his possession at the time of his death. He mentions it in his will, and bequeaths its contents to his wife. George the Third, who frequently resided at Kew, used to call and see Gainsborough at his Richmond house, where the artist had a picture by Vandevelde, which was admired by his Majesty. The Vandevelde was among the pictures offered for sale at Schomberg House the year after Gainsborough's death, and some surprise was then expressed that no effort was made to secure it for the Royal collection.

CHAPTER XIV

LONDON, 1786

The wreck of the *Halswelle*—Exhibition at Gainsborough's gallery—A group of landscapes—Two portraits of the Prince of Wales—He buys a second landscape—List of portraits exhibited—The *Morning Walk* and Théophile Gautier—Gainsborough and the Academy—Comments of the newspapers—Bate's rejoinder—Sir Joshua and the *Girl with Pigs*—Hayley on Gainsborough—He commences the *Market Cart*—The *Girl with Milk*—Portraits of the Duke of Norfolk, Mrs. Sheridan, Lady Basset, and Mrs. Franco—Lord Archibald Hamilton and his brother—A signed portrait—"Mr. Coke of Norfolk in his Shooting Habit"—Gainsborough at Holkham.

ANOTHER visit to Bath was made by Gainsborough in January 1786, and in February he completed a second full-length of Lord Mulgrave, which was described as possessing in likeness and spirit all the recommendations of the first portrait. There was some gossip at this time about a portrait of the Prince of Wales, which the Duke of Orleans intended to have painted for his new gallery at the Palais Royal. It was suggested that Gainsborough should be the artist, and that the Prince should wear for this portrait a costume of the period of Edward the Fourth, with the pendant George at his breast, and his head adorned with the crest of the Principality. However, nothing appears to have come of this suggestion, or of the idea of painting a picture of the wreck of the *Halswelle*, which Gainsborough entertained in the early months of the year.

The tragic story of the loss of the great East Indiaman on the 6th of January 1786 caused a sensation in England something akin to that occasioned by the sinking of the *Titanic* in our own time. The *Halswelle*, outward bound, was wrecked on the Dorsetshire coast,

near St. Alban's Head. Nearly four hundred of her crew and passengers were drowned, including her commander, Captain Pierce, and his two daughters, whom he was taking to India upon what he intended should be his last voyage. Pierce was a man of cultivation. One of the chroniclers of the wreck says that the commander of the *Halswelle* "had a great taste for the polite arts, and was the means of making the fortune of Mr. Zoffany the painter by taking him to India and recommending him there. In this fatal voyage he took a son of Mr. Miller, the organist of Doncaster, to superintend his band of music and to accompany his daughters at their pianoforte. But neither Mr. Miller's son nor one of the band of musicians escaped the fury of the devouring waves." The influence of Zoffany and other European painters who visited India appears to have encouraged a taste for the fine arts among the settlers from the West, for it is remarked that the cargo of the *Halswelle* included a large assortment of boxes of colours, crayons, black-lead pencils, and a variety of other articles for drawing and painting, shipped by Messrs. Reeves & Son, of Holborn Bridge. Gainsborough and Opie are both described, soon after the news of the wreck reached London, as meditating its illustration upon canvas. "We laud the spirit of emulation," says a writer in commenting on this announcement, "and hope it will produce a degree of excellence in both at which neither may repine." I can find no record of any picture of the kind by Gainsborough or Opie, but the wreck inspired the brush of another artist, James Northcote, R.A., who exhibited *The Loss of the Halswelle East Indiaman* in the Academy of 1786.

Gainsborough's idea of illustrating the tragedy of the 6th of January was probably a momentary impulse, soon forgotten in the joy of landscape painting, at which he was working hard in February and March. At the end of the last-named month it is announced that Gains-

borough has been dedicating his skill to scenes of wild nature, and that seven landscapes—of the most charming subjects—have been completed. They are all small, and four of them almost minute, and finished with what is spoken of as extraordinary neatness. Cattle, sheep, lonely shepherds, herdsmen, broken ground, sedgy water and romantic trees, appear in them in beautiful disposition. A week or two later this group of "seven imaginary views" forms one of the features of the newly arranged exhibition in the gallery at Schomberg House, which challenged that of the Royal Academy with a collection of pictures, old and new, from Gainsborough's hand. Bate gives lengthy notices of the exhibition, commencing with the landscapes.

"Although," he says, "the excellency of Mr. Gainsborough's portraits, and their subjects, are of the first attraction, yet as his late-finished landscapes are the general topic among the devotees to the polite arts we must commence with them and defer to a future number our account of the Portrait Gallery."

I quote his careful descriptions of the landscapes in the hope that they may lead to the identification of some of Gainsborough's smaller works which it has hitherto been almost impossible to assign to a definite period.

"The largest of these landscapes displays a romantic scene. Broken ground, water, sloping trees, and an extended upland. In the foreground, near a cottage, three horses are seen with pack-saddles on them; one is laid down to rest, and the whole seem as if weary. The driver appears near at hand, and some cottagers complete the number of figures. The sky of this piece is painted with the most exquisite touches, and the clouds marked with uncommon brightness and serenity."

This may perhaps be the small picture shown at Messrs. Agnews' Gallery in the autumn of 1902, and described in their catalogue as *A Woody Landscape with Pack-horses resting by a Cottage.*

"The next picture in point of dimensions," continues Bate, "is a representation of a woody country, the face of which is covered with variety; distant thickets, jutting headlands, trees rich with foliage of the most spirited pencilling, and here and there diversified with the yellow of autumn. On a sunny bank, kept at a proper distance, sheep are browsing; a cottage is seen near, and in the foreground a herdsman is driving cattle to a sedgy watering place. The light and shade of this picture diffuse a fine effect upon the scene, and the sky, rich with fervid clouds, adds to the beauty of the landscape.

"A small landscape in a black frame demands particular attention on account of a sky possessed of a clearness and transparency that approaches nature to the most perfect point of imitation; and the little expanse to the horizon, of a rugged surface, broken steep, withered trees, a shepherd and dog with sheep, and a variety of objects besides, entice the eye to dwell on the faithful scene.

"The picture next to be noticed is a landscape which is in a trifling degree in the style of Ruysdael; we mean more in respect to the air of colouring than the manner. The trees are in full leaf, but yet the sky is tinted so as to give an impression of wintry cold. Some cattle and a peasant are in the foreground, with other minute figures. Two subjects of a lesser size are excellent companions. One of them discovers a shepherd playing with his dog, his sheep lie in scattered parcels. A cow is grazing on a rising bank. Trees in verdure, and decayed trunks, water and other images fill up the perspective. The companion represents cows on a common, a sedgy brook, and trees and hills in the distance. The seventh view consists of a rising ground with a country cart, team, and other rural representations."

These notes on Gainsborough's newly painted landscapes were soon followed by others on the portraits in his gallery. Two unfinished portraits of the Prince of Wales first attract the writer's attention. He regrets that Gainsborough has so far been able to obtain only one sitting for each of them, and declares that in their present condition they seem to reprove the Prince for his

absence from the studio. One of these was the before-mentioned portrait commissioned by Mr. Thomas Coke of Norfolk, showing the Prince in armour. The other, painted for "a distinguished character in public life," was apparently at this time not sketched beyond the head, as it is stated that Gainsborough intended to make the costume a gala dress. The full-length of Lady Sheffield, commenced in 1785, was now seen in its finished state and met with general approbation; but the full-length of Mrs. Sheridan seated in a wood, begun at the same time, was as yet without some of the details that now figure in the background of the picture. At this exhibition, too, the National Gallery portrait of Mrs. Siddons was shown publicly for the first time, together with another portrait of Mrs. Watson, which is praised for its spirit and likeness; and a three-quarter length of Mrs. Fane, "a very animated portrait, and the habit of Ruben's wife in which she is painted is a well chosen dress." Gainsborough, it will be remembered, had already exhibited a portrait of a Mrs. Fane at the Academy of 1782.

Portraits of men shown at Gainsborough's house on this occasion included two full-lengths of distinguished persons in their official robes. One of them, painted a year earlier, represented the Speaker, Sir Wolfran Cornwall; the other, Lord Frederick Campbell, Lord Clerk Register of Scotland, son of the famous beauty, Mary Bellenden, and brother to the fourth Duke of Argyll. Lord Harrington, in regimentals, figured on another canvas, and the exhibition also contained the portraits of Lord Rodney and his fellow-seaman, Admiral Graves, two half-lengths of Baron Skinner, and whole-lengths of Mr. Beaufoy and Captain Berkeley. The portrait of Captain Berkeley, showing him standing on the shore and signalling to a boat, was the one shown at Gainsborough's first private exhibition in 1784. It still remained in the gallery, and with it the group of the *Three*

Eldest Princesses, which had also been shown at Gainsborough's house in 1784, after its removal from the Academy. Bate announces in his review of the present exhibition that the picture of the Princesses will remain in the charge of Mr. Gainsborough until the completion of the Saloon at Carlton House, in which the Prince of Wales intended to hang the portraits of all his numerous brothers and sisters. He supplements this announcement a few days later by stating that the King has given the Prince a number of fine pictures for the adornment of Carlton House, and among them the most recent paintings of their Majesties and the royal children by Gainsborough.

It is unfortunate that one of the most famous pictures of this period, the portraits of young Mr. and Mrs. Hallet, painted full-length on one canvas, and now known as *The Morning Walk*, was not shown at the 1786 exhibition. We gather from a note by Bate that it was painted in the autumn of 1785, and that it was on view for a time in Gainsborough's studio. But he says very little about it, although, as he was once curate at Hendon, he was probably acquainted with some of the Hallet family, whose estate of Canons was in that neighbourhood. It was this superb portrait that fascinated Théophile Gautier, who said he felt when he saw it "a strange retrospective sensation, so intense is the illusion it produces of the spirit of the eighteenth century. We really fancy we see the young couple walking arm in arm along a garden avenue." Lord Rothschild is the fortunate possessor of the painting which so greatly charmed the appreciative French critic.

The Prince of Wales, who already owned an important landscape by Gainsborough, purchased a second example of his work in the spring of 1786. This was the picture of a country waggon returning from market in the evening, mentioned in the last chapter as painted in the winter of 1784–5. It was bought by the Prince to

hang as a companion to the landscape described in the account of the first exhibition at Schomberg House. Both remained in Gainsborough's charge until his death in 1788, and, by the Prince's permission, were shown with the other pictures by the artist at the exhibition and sale of 1789. In 1841 the two landscapes were offered for sale at Christie's and bought in as the reserve was not reached. Christie's advertisement throws some light on their history after they were removed from Gainsborough's house. "Two magnificent works of Gainsborough, the property of a man of fashion. By Messrs. Christie & Manson at their Great Room, King Street, St. James's, Saturday, March 27. A pair of landscapes by Gainsborough in his very finest time and manner, which were painted for the Prince of Wales by whom they were presented to Mrs. Fitzherbert. The one represents a market-cart with figures, descending a hill in a richly wooded landscape; the companion a grand romantic landscape with a shepherd keeping sheep in a valley surrounded by bold mountainous scenery. These superb works are in the finest state." The "man of fashion" by whom they were offered for sale was Colonel Dawson-Damer.

Returning to 1786, Lord Surrey's portrait was still in hand in April, although commenced nearly two years earlier. This was the full-length shown, with only the head finished, at Schomberg House in July 1784, when it was stated that the sitter was to be painted in a dress of the seventeenth century. The dress, of the Vandyke fashion, was now well advanced, but the portrait in its complete state was not exhibited until after Lord Surrey succeeded his father as Duke of Norfolk. Another sitter of April was Lady Impey, whose portrait is mentioned as descriptive of her unaffected manner and natural character.

As in the preceding spring of 1785 the newspapers were now discussing the quarrels of the artists, and the

prospect of the reappearance at Somerset House of those who had disagreed with the Academy. The outlook was not hopeful. "The disputes between the gentlemen of the brush," says the *Morning Post*, "are not yet accommodated. Consequently the public will continue to miss Gainsborough, Romney, &c., who content themselves with the private approbation of their visitors." Another paper expresses the hope that Gainsborough will not through an ill-judged pride deprive the public of a view of his beautiful landscape and the new portrait of Mrs. Sheridan; and the *Public Advertiser*, referring to the recently painted picture of the children with the donkey, says, "Gainsborough's Ass is an Ass indeed if it stays out of the Exhibition. It would be loaded with popularity, more if possible, and more deservedly, than the Pigs and Milk, or the Boys and Dogs."

However, Gainsborough sent nothing to Somerset House, and at the end of April, when the galleries had opened their doors, the *Morning Chronicle*, graver and more sedate than its contemporaries, ventures to chide him among others:

"That the present exhibition is a very good one, we see and we feel," says the *Chronicle*, "but we see and feel so strongly for the risk it ran of being otherwise that we think too much reprehension cannot be pointed against the causes which might have made it otherwise. The perverse sequestration of Gainsborough, of Wright of Derby, of Meyer, of Dance, and perhaps some other, is to be deemed a desertion of duty. It is an object provoking popular displeasure. And from this time forth there should subsist among the laws of the Academy some other order compulsive of individual effort in all instances contributing to the general stock. That each artist should exhibit or should fine."

But Bate, who had been silent in the controversy on the same subject which had raged in the spring of the preceding year, now spoke with evident authority in the *Morning Herald*, and while snubbing the commentators

on the Academy quarrel, showed how Gainsborough still resented the treatment of the group of the *Three Eldest Princesses* two years before. He writes :

" Much has been said in the public prints in reproof of Mr. Gainsborough's continuing to withhold his works from the Academy. We cannot, however, but consider such remarks as unmeaning and impertinent, because those who are too much in the dark to judge of the affront offered to the celebrated artist and the feelings that were thereby excited are ill qualified to decide upon the propriety of his conduct. We, however, regret with all possible concern the absence of his admirable and various performances ; his portraits whose imitation assumes the energy of life, his landscapes where Nature appears as in a mirror ; and those little, simple subjects where, in a peasant, a woodman, a shepherd boy or cottage girl, a story was told that awakened in the heart the most pathetic sensations and equally evinced the truth, science and genius of the admirable master."

The bitterness of this note is emphasized by others that appeared in the *Herald*, and indicated increasing ill-feeling towards the President, who only four years before had bought Gainsborough's *Girl with Pigs* from the exhibition of the Royal Academy, and written its painter a letter with " half-a-hundred graceful compliments." " Why," asks Bate querulously, " does Sir Joshua hang Mr. Gainsborough's little picture of the pigs in his cabinet collection of all the great masters of past times ? Does Sir Joshua really intend this as a compliment to his contemporary, or is it to afford room for invidious comparison ? Let Sir Joshua mean as he will, the merits of the painting cannot be destroyed."

Reynolds, who had in 1784 been exonerated by Bate from all complicity in the refusal to place the *Three Eldest Princesses* at the desired elevation, was now himself a sufferer at the hands of the Committee of Arrangement of the Academy Exhibition. The *Morning Post*, in its notice of the Academy of 1786, praises Sir Joshua's

Portrait of a Young Gentleman (10), and then proceeds to upbraid the hangers for the disgraceful position they have assigned to it. "Shame on you, ye Jack Ketches appointed for hanging the pictures!—for removing this gem of the first water to a height that renders it almost invisible, and placing your own daubings in the most advantageous situations." But despite the bad hanging of the *Portrait of a Young Gentleman*, Sir Joshua shone with more than ordinary lustre at the Academy. Among his thirteen canvases were the well-known portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire and her infant daughter, and those of Joshua Sharpe and of John Hunter the great surgeon. Another notable canvas shown this year by the President was a full-length portrait of the Duke of Orleans, who was in England at the time of the Academy dinner, and attended it in company with the Prince of Wales and a host of notabilities, English and foreign. At the dinner, which was more than usually magnificent, the Duke sat beneath his own portrait.

In May Gainsborough was once more painting pigs, but we are not told whether he allowed them to run about on the studio floor as he did when he was at work on the picture bought by Sir Joshua. The description suggests rather that the animals in the second picture were painted from the studies made for the first one. "Mr. Gainsborough is at this time engaged upon a beautiful landscape in the foreground of which the trio of pigs that are so highly celebrated by the connoisseurs are introduced, together with the little girl and several other rustic figures." The picture was bought a few weeks later by Mr. Tollemache, who was also the owner of Gainsborough's *Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting*, exhibited at the Academy of 1783.

The summer of 1786 was a period of hard work for the artist, who in the autumn was congratulated upon the result of his labours. The editor of the *Morning Herald* quotes Hayley's lines :

"Art with no common gifts her Gainsbro' graced
Two different pencils in his hand she placed;
This shall command, she said, with certain aim,
The perfect semblance of the human frame
This, lightly sporting on the velvet green
Paint the wild beauties of the mimic scene."

He adds that, in illustration of what the poet advances, Gainsborough has completed most of the portraits now in his gallery with the happiest success, and given some beautiful representations of rustic nature with his peculiar excellence. One of these rustic pictures, described in October as just finished, is a study of a peasant child returning to a cottage with a pan of milk. A cow and a woman milking are seen in the distance, and "a landscape full of beautiful variety is finely tempered with a well-tinted sky."

But a far more important pastoral picture was finished in the autumn of 1786. This was the famous work, *The Market Cart,* now in the National Gallery, and the best known of all Gainsborough's landscapes. The date of *The Market Cart* has always been a matter of conjecture, and the compilers of the National Gallery catalogue have not ventured to assign it to any period, although they attach speculative dates to other canvases by Gainsborough. The first mention of it in 1786 is not by Bate, but by a rival journalist who, after writing about the pictures he had seen at Schomberg House, apologises for not having mentioned first "this fine work; a large upright landscape; a cart upon unequal ground with cabbages, carrots and turnips, and figures in and out of the cart, the whole in Gainsborough's best style." A description, written a little later in the *Morning Herald,* is far fuller and better than the foregoing, and identifies the picture beyond all possible doubt:

"In departing from the portraits (at Schomberg House) the eye cannot dwell too long on a beautiful landscape that Mr. Gainsborough has finished within these few days. It is a representation of a wood, through

which a road appears. A loaded market cart with two girls seated on the top is passing along, and beside the road some weary travellers are resting. The foliage of the trees is in a rich variation of hues, expressive of autumn—here the trees are verdant, a browner aspect there prevails—and all the varied greens and yellows of the season temper the scene and exhibit a pleasing harmony. The interior recesses of the wood afford charming invitations to the eye. The distances are exquisitely soft, and some broken clouds, diffused over the trees and through the branches, give a delightful aspect to the whole."

To the further history of this important picture I shall refer in the succeeding chapter.

The portraits and other pictures shown at Gainsborough's gallery towards the end of 1786 are mentioned in several journals, one of which speaks of the new picture of the child with the pan of milk as "a good, small whole-length of the same girl whom Gainsborough put into a yet better picture with an ass." Bate, however, describes the picture as one of a little peasant boy carrying a pan of milk to a neighbouring cottage from an adjoining field; and later, when it was shown at Macklin's Gallery as *Lavinia*, he made some amusing comments on the misappropriateness of its title. If, as I imagine, the painting of the child with a pan of milk is the one that was afterwards in the possession of Samuel Rogers, it has generally been described as representing a girl. Rogers lent it to the exhibition of Gainsborough's work held at the British Institution in 1814, and it appears in the catalogue as *Girl with Milk*. With the same title and a description that exactly corresponds with the one given by Bate, the pictures figure in Fulcher's list of Gainsborough's pictures accompanied by an interesting anecdote told to Fulcher by Sir George Phillips, who at that time (1856) owned the so-called *Girl with Milk*. "The picture," said Sir George, "was bought by my father about forty years ago from his friend, the late

MRS. SHERIDAN

By permission of Lord Rothschild

Mr. Rogers, for a hundred and seventy guineas, the price Mr. Rogers had paid for it. The reason he was ready to part with one of Gainsborough's most beautiful works was a remark of Benjamin West's that 'the girl's hair was heavily painted.' I do not think that West's brother artists would have joined in this criticism." Fulcher, it may be remarked, describes as *Girls with a Donkey* the picture of the *Cottage Children with the Ass*, the figures in which were certainly intended by Gainsborough to represent a girl and her younger brother.

Among the portraits in Gainsborough's autumn exhibition was one of the Duke of Norfolk, commenced, as I have already explained, when that nobleman was Lord Surrey. More than two years in hand, it was now at length completed, and this full-length of the Duke in a Vandyke habit is described as a fine portrait of his Grace, although it is suggested that its effect would have been better had the draperies been crimson instead of black. Gainsborough, as we know, thought that fancy dress was apt to deprive a portrait of some of its qualities of likeness, and this appears to have been the case with the Duke of Norfolk. A journalist who went to see the pictures at Schomberg House says in a note on the subject, "The Duke of Norfolk has chosen to be painted in the Vandyke dress, and so, though the picture is very like, it is not perceived to be so," a remark, it is safe to say, that Gainsborough himself must have inspired when he was showing the portrait to the visitor. The portrait of Mrs. Sheridan, seated beneath a tree, reappeared once more at this exhibition, but still lacked the final touches in the shape of the lambs, which the artist, according to Bate, was then about to add, to give the picture "an air more pastoral than it at present possesses." A half-length of Lady Basset (afterwards Lady de Dunstanville) is probably the portrait shown at the Winter Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1876, and at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885. The portrait of

this lady, who was the wife of the purchaser of the *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*, is mentioned as "delicately touched; the most exquisite softness pervades the whole. The hands are finished with the beauty of Vandyke." A further note on the same portrait again suggests the inspiration of Gainsborough, and recalls the trouble about the *Three Eldest Princesses*. "This picture, from the tenderness of the colouring should not be hung at a great elevation; its effect else will be diminished."

Of the full-length of "the bewitching Mrs. Franco, whose inviting lip and animated eye retain the expression and fire of nature," it is said that the Juno air of the sitter is admirably hit off and the drapery full of easy negligence. A half-length of Mrs. Hibbert was perhaps the portrait lent to the Royal Academy in 1885. A portrait of Lord Rodney, painted for Alderman Harley (it is not clear whether this is the canvas painted a year or two earlier) is declared by one of the critics—a devotee of Gilbert Stuart—to be far inferior to a study of the Admiral by the American artist. The same writer thinks that the portrait of Lord Camden, which is also in the exhibition, is the best that Gainsborough ever painted; but that its supremacy may be challenged by the portrait of Justice Willes, hanging on the same wall but at present unfinished. Of the remaining portraits in the gallery three call for special remark.

Gainsborough, always fond of the costume of his beloved Vandyke, even though it cost his portraits some of the likeness upon which he prided himself, had recently painted in this dress one of the two sons of Lord Archibald Hamilton, who a few years afterwards succeeded to the Dukedom of Hamilton. In his notice of this exhibition of Gainsborough's gallery, Bate says: "Two of the sons of Lord Archibald Hamilton are charming portraits. The elder brother is in a Vandyke habit and his hair in a style to comport with the drapery. The other is in a more modern dress." These portraits are no doubt the two

ovals lent by the late Sir William Agnew in 1891 to the Old Masters exhibition at the Royal Academy. The catalogue of that exhibition states that the boy in the Vandyke dress is the younger brother Archibald; but, as we see, Bate, when writing about the pictures of 1786, says that the elder boy Alexander is thus attired. Bate, and Gainsborough from whom he obtained his information, may have fallen into error in this matter on account of the younger brother instead of the elder bearing the Christian name of his father. The portrait of the brother, whichever it is, with the Vandyke dress and long hair, is now in the collection of Miss Alice de Rothschild. It is one of the comparatively few signed works by Gainsborough.

The last work to be noticed in this remarkable exhibition is the full-length of Mr. Thomas Coke of Norfolk, the great landowner and earnest politician who commissioned Gainsborough to paint the portrait of the Prince of Wales to which reference has been made. The portrait of the Prince was still awaiting the additional sittings for which the artist begged in vain, but that of Mr. Coke was completed in the autumn of the year (1786) now under review. It was a work calculated to appeal particularly to a lover of sport like Bate, who says of it:

"The portrait of Mr. Coke of Norfolk, in his shooting habit, is one of the happiest efforts in that line of painting we have for some time witnessed. The colouring and pencilling is in Mr. Gainsborough's best manner. The dogs, which are in the language of sportsmen *watching charge*, are charmingly composed. The action of two of them is particularly striking:—the one is viewing a dead woodcock that lies at his master's foot, and the other looking up to Mr. Coke while he is loading his piece."

This whole length, now at Holkham, remained for many months in the artist's studio, from whence it was despatched in the summer of 1787. "Mr. Gainsborough's charming portrait of Mr. Coke, with his spaniels panting round him, is sent off to the seat of his sister, for whom

it was painted." The original of the portrait, known everywhere in England for half a century or more as "Mr. Coke of Norfolk," was created Earl of Leicester in the year 1837, and the present Lord Leicester is his grandson. Mr. Coke appears to have been on the most friendly terms with Gainsborough, who once stayed at Holkham, and it is believed painted there the portrait of himself that still hangs in the Hall. But no trustworthy evidence is known to exist concerning Gainsborough's visit to Holkham or what he did there. One of Thomas Coke's biographers states that his daughters, Jane and Ann, were pupils of Gainsborough, who stayed at Holkham to teach them, and did so with such success that some of their work can hardly be distinguished from his own. This must be a mistake. Mr. Coke's eldest daughter, Jane, was not born until 1777, and Gainsborough, if he gave her any instruction, could not have done so after she was much more than ten years old, as he died in 1788.

CHAPTER XV

LONDON, 1787

The Shakespeare Gallery—Gainsborough unrepresented—The reason—"Three pictures for three thousand guineas"—*The Market Cart*—Gainsborough paints Lady Clive and Lady Hopetoun—Pitt sits at Schomberg House—Lord Lansdowne—Sale of the *Cottage Children with the Ass*—Sir Peter Burrell buys *The Market Cart*—The luck of the Burrells—Gainsborough's prices for portraits—He buys a Murillo—A famous trial—Gainsborough's evidence—"The painter's eye"—Gainsborough in Flanders—Death of Abel—*The Marsham Family*—Mr. Knapp—De Loutherbourg—Bate's country house—His wife painted by Gainsborough—The Duke of York—*The Wood Gatherers*—Jack Hill—Mrs. Welbore Ellis—Mrs. Pujet—Gainsborough exhibits at Liverpool—Improved relations with the Royal Academy.

WHEN Alderman Boydell set on foot his famous scheme for the foundation of a Shakespeare Gallery he offered commissions to most of the prominent English figure painters who were practising in 1786. The scheme promised well, for the alderman was a liberal paymaster, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, Romney, West, Wright of Derby, Barry, Fuseli, Smirke, Northcote, Westall, and Hamilton were among those who responded to his invitation. Gainsborough, for some reason that has until now remained a mystery, was not represented in the Shakespeare Gallery, but the cause of his absence is made clear by some paragraphs which appeared in the *World* and the *Morning Herald* in January, 1787. Writing in the last-mentioned journal, Bate says:

"When Mr. Gainsborough was applied to by Mr. Alderman Boydell to paint a scene for the much vaunted edition of Shakespeare, he demanded a thousand pounds. A subject in which ten or twelve figures are introduced —painted with that adherence to Nature which has ever

distinguished the pencil of Mr. Gainsborough—cannot be too highly rewarded."

The critic of the *World*, to whose admiration for the portraits of Stuart I have recently alluded, was also a passionate admirer of Romney, and Romney—a personal friend of Boydell—was one of the earliest supporters of the scheme for the foundation of the Shakespeare Gallery. Two or three days after the appearance of the paragraph in the *Herald* an article was published in the *World*, in which the writer, after noticing the enthusiasm of the artists and mentioning the intended contributions of Sir Joshua to the Gallery, goes on to say:

"Mr. Romney, of whom against the world (that is not our *World* and but a very small part indeed of any other) we profess ourselves the defender—Mr. Romney begins with the banquet scene of *Macbeth*. Mr. Gainsborough does not paint, and though his place may easily be supplied, we are sorry his name is not to be on this great record of fame. We are not insensible to his merit, and he would have made a very amusing picture from the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*—of Launce and his dog. But it could not be, for his proposal was thus impossible:—To paint three pictures for three thousand guineas. And not till the expiration of three years!"

Bate, who never overlooked any expression derogatory to Gainsborough, answered the *World* critic on the following morning:

"A paper of yesterday in a most un-*palette*-able criticism upon painters, extols Romney, and observes that Gainsborough, who is the most faithful disciple of Nature that ever painted, may easily have his place supplied! Should the liberal artist in question see the contemptible insinuation he will smile, we know, but he might justly exclaim, 'Why ignorance itself is a plummet o'er me!'"

Here the matter dropped, but there was to be more trouble with the *World* a few months later.

Another note on *The Market Cart* mentions as an

object of special interest the figure of the woodman with a faggot, which Gainsborough had added to the picture since the publication of the first description. This note was published in January, when a portrait of Lady Clive was in hand and the beauty of the finished head is extolled. "The eye, the lip, have the sensibility of life. But this is to be a full-length; proceed, good artist, we beseech you, and give to the limbs their symmetry and grace." Lady Hopetoun is another sitter of the same period, and in this case Gainsborough's friendly critic hopes much from the combination of the subject and the artist, where Nature on the one hand and genius on the other have been profusely liberal. But Lady Hopetoun had at this time been a wife for twenty years, and had lost some of her youthful freshness, as Bate does not fail to recognise, though in the politest fashion. "Her Ladyship," he says, "though not in the bloom of life, possesses that elegance, grace, and beauty which form the best combination a picture can have."

But ladies, whether fair or faded, did not engross Gainsborough's brush in the opening months of 1787. Pitt was attending his studio at Schomberg House for a portrait intended for Mr. Grenville, and described as an extraordinary likeness, and impressed with all the anxiety and importance of public concern. A second sitter of distinction was the recently created Marquis of Lansdowne—better know at this time by his old title of Lord Shelburne, of whom Walpole declared that "his falsehood was so constant and notorious that it was rather his profession than his instrument." Mrs. Piozzi, who had no love for this statesman, tells an anecdote about him and Gainsborough in her interesting *Letters and Literary Remains*. "A man," she said, "remarkable for duplicity, will always be suspected whether deserving suspicion or no. Gainsborough drew Lord Shelburne's portrait; my Lord complained it was not like. The painter said *he* did not approve it, and begged to try

again. Failing this time, however, he flung away his pencil, saying 'D—n it, I never could see through varnish,' and there's an end!"

Mrs. Piozzi was mistaken in supposing that Lord Lansdowne's portrait was left unfinished by Gainsborough, who was well acquainted with the equivocating peer, and had been his guest at Bowood. Gainsborough may not have had much sympathy with Lord Lansdowne (who was an intimate friend of Sir Joshua Reynolds), but his portrait, painted in April, 1787, was certainly completed, and was the subject of flattering contemporary notice. Supposed to be intended for a present for the King of France, it was described in the following terms: "The art cannot go beyond this effort. There is magic in the picture and it appears to breathe. The portrait is destined for France, and we may add that the honour of England in the Fine Arts will be extended wherever it goes." However Bate, while praising the picture, had nothing good to say about the original, to whom in politics he was opposed, and he accompanied his notes on Lord Lansdowne's portrait with some verses that must have been instantly challenged if they had been applied to a modern statesman:

EPIGRAMMATIC

"When Mighty Louis lately sighed for peace
Unnumbered *pictures* of himself sent o'er
More bright and luring than the Golden Fleece
Strong likenesses which Ministers adore.

These, decking Bowood out in lovely dress,
Might well a L . nsd . . n's heart with transport burn,
And Decency point out—he could no less
Than send one choice, rich picture in return.

'Come hither, Gainsbro',' says the Peer of Smiles,
Himself a dealer deep in oil and varnish,
'Quick, paint my head with all its courtly wiles,
For Gallia's King in colours naught can tarnish!'

Gainsbro' by art unknown to Ancient Greece,
And subtle strokes no Roman brush could measure,
With bold, deep tints soon stamped a *single piece*
Which taste in every clime must own a TREASURE."

THE MARKET CART

National Gallery

Lord Lansdowne's portrait and that of his son, Lord Wycombe, were exhibited at Gainsborough's gallery together with a number of other paintings in the first week of May. The picture of the *Cottage Children with the Ass* was there, but only for a short time, as it was soon to be despatched to Exton, the seat of the Earl of Gainsborough, who had bought it for three hundred guineas. Another picture that was soon to leave the gallery was *The Market Cart*, which had just been sold for three hundred and fifty guineas to a generous patron of Gainsborough, Sir Peter Burrell.

Sir Peter belonged to a family whose extraordinary good fortune caused "the luck of the Burrells" to become proverbial in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The son of a man of small estate but good family, Peter Burrell's engaging manners and graceful person early captivated the heart of the Duke of Ancaster's eldest daughter, whom he married in 1779. Soon after the marriage the Duke and his only son died, and Burrell's wife succeeded to much of the vast Ancaster estates and to the Barony of Willoughby de Eresby. She also inherited jointly with her sister the post of Great Chamberlain of England, the duties of which were for many years executed by her fortunate husband, who in the year that he bought *The Market Cart* succeeded to a baronetcy through the death of his great-uncle. The luck of the Burrells was shared by most of the women of the family. Sir Peter had four sisters, all poor and only one—the eldest—a beauty. She married a commoner, but the plain sisters—"never were women less endowed with uncommon attractions of external form"—became the brides respectively of the Duke of Northumberland, the Duke of Hamilton, and the Earl of Beverley.

The Market Cart remained in the possession of Sir Peter Burrell (afterwards created Lord Gwydyr) until his death, when his heir sent it to Christie's, together with Sir Joshua's *Holy Family*. Fulcher says that *The Market Cart* was bought on this occasion by Seguier on behalf

of the National Gallery, but this is incorrect. It was bought for what was regarded at the time as the enormous price of £1102, 10*s.* by the Governors of the British Institution, who also purchased the Sir Joshua, and subsequently presented both pictures to the National Gallery.

A portrait of Sir Peter Burrell was shown at Gainsborough's gallery at the same time with *The Market Cart.* The baronet was represented gun in hand, with his horse standing by him, and a woodland landscape in the background. In noticing this picture Bate ventured to criticise Gainsborough; or more probably to point out what the artist himself disliked and had painted only to please his client. It seems to have been a case of the Tarleton portrait over again, and of Gainsborough allowing himself to see with the eyes of another. "We hint to Mr. Gainsborough," says the *Morning Herald* "to reform the drapery of Sir Peter Burrell's portrait. The length of the thigh and leg, unbroken by a knee-band, takes from either limb that excellence of shape which it else would possess. If it is the fancy of the artist he deserves reproof. If the taste of Sir Peter, he has a right to please himself, although he is a sufferer by it. The horse's head is finely painted and the landscape of the first beauty. Nothing can exceed the foreground, and the distances have a fine aerial effect." Evidently no notice was taken of this criticism, as the baronet's legs are to be seen to-day in the portrait, unbound by knee-bands. Gainsborough at first intended to introduce some dogs into the foreground of the picture; but afterwards altered his mind. This portrait was never exhibited in London until 1913, when it was shown (as *Lord Gwydyr*) at the French Gallery, Pall Mall, within two or three hundred yards of the house in which Sir Peter sat for it. The catalogue described it as a work of 1779, but it was painted in March and April 1787.

Gainsborough was at this time at the height of his

prosperity. He was selling his landscapes and subject pictures for excellent prices, and his services were more than ever in demand for portraiture. His friend of the *Morning Herald*, in speaking of the approaching departure from the gallery of such pictures as *The Market Cart* and the *Cottage Children with the Ass*, laments that the pressure of portrait commissions will probably prevent the artist from replacing them for an indefinite period. "When the room is thus stripped of its best ornaments little else will remain to gratify the visiting eye; and when the loss will be supplied who can determine? No respite, it seems, can be allowed the artist from portrait-painting; and because he has lately advanced his terms he is more sought after than ever. His prices are now forty guineas for a three-quarters, eighty guineas for a half-length and a hundred and sixty for a full length. Sir Joshua's charges, are, however, still higher." Bate means by "a three-quarters" not a three-quarter length portrait, but a head-size—a canvas about three-quarters of a yard in length. These prices were maintained by Gainsborough until the end of his life.

Always a lover of the Old Masters, Gainsborough was a frequent buyer of pictures and had many transactions with dealers, but, as will be seen later, he was not fortunate as a collector, and some of the pictures ascribed by him to famous hands proved afterwards to be almost unsaleable. In the spring of this year (1787) he made his most important purchase. This was a picture by Murillo of *St. John in the Wilderness*. It was brought from Spain by Cumberland, who in a short time passed it on to the dealer Desenfans, by whom it was sold to Gainsborough for five hundred guineas. The Murillo proved to be as bad a bargain financially as most of the painter's speculations of a similar kind. Mrs. Gainsborough sold it after her husband's death at a loss of nearly a third of the original price.

In Hazlitt's *Conversations with Northcote* the old

Academician says of Gainsborough that, with all his simplicity, he had wit too, and gives an example of one of his repartees. "An eminent counsel once attempted to puzzle him on some trial about the originality of a picture by saying, 'I observe you lay great stress on the phrase *the painter's eye;* what do you mean by that?' 'The painter's eye,' answered Gainsborough, 'is to him what the lawyer's tongue is to you.'" Hazlitt gives neither the date nor any further particulars of this trial, which to the best of my belief has not been described or even identified by modern writers on art history. It was, however, an event of great interest. Many of the important painters of Gainsborough's time were called as witnesses, and the evidence of some of them was both valuable and amusing.

The trial, which took place in the summer of 1787, was between two picture dealers, Desenfans and Vandergucht, and the point at issue was the authenticity of a picture by Poussin, which Vandergucht had sold to Desenfans for £700. Both parties to the suit were well known to Reynolds and Gainsborough, and additional piquancy was given to the affair by a rumour that the great rivals would give evidence on opposite sides.

Noel Desenfans, the plaintiff in the case, has been described as "half-trading, half-dilettante." Sir Joshua used to laugh at Desenfans, and once intentionally deceived him by allowing him to purchase a copy of a Claude instead of the original, afterwards returning his cheque with a sarcastic note in which the President expressed his surprise that a man of such profound knowledge should have been so easily taken in. Desenfans was closely associated with the artist Peter Francis Bourgeois, with whom Gainsborough had long been on friendly terms. Gainsborough had business transactions with Desenfans, and, as we have seen, had bought from him only a few weeks before the trial the Murillo brought from Spain by Cumberland. It was Desenfans who be-

queathed to Bourgeois many of the pictures that are now at the Dulwich Gallery. Benjamin Vandergucht, the defendant in the case, was one of the first students admitted to the schools of the Royal Academy. He practised for some years as an artist, but ultimately turned to picture dealing and "restoring." To his hands, some months earlier, Reynolds had sorrowfully resigned the damaged Titian belonging to the Earl of Upper Ossory, after the Earl had refused to exchange it for Gainsborough's *Girl with Pigs*. "The value of the picture," said Sir Joshua, "will be lessened in proportion as he endeavours to make it better."

The picture over which these well-matched antagonists were disputing was a large work, *La Vierge aux Enfants*, which Desenfans had purchased with a warranty that it was from the hand of Nicolas Poussin. Desenfans had since been advised that the picture was not by Poussin, and was now suing Vandergucht for the return of the seven hundred pounds he had paid for it. The first witness called was Peter Francis Bourgeois (afterwards Sir Francis Bourgeois, R.A.). He testified that in the preceding February Desenfans received a letter from Vandergucht informing him that the magnificent Poussin, of which he had already heard, had just arrived from France; that it was an undoubted original of the great master, and, in point of composition and handling, the first picture in Europe. "Dear Sir," said Vandergucht in his letter, "represent to yourself seventeen fine children beautifully grouped, attending and adoring the Virgin!" Desenfans, said Bourgeois, had thereupon hastened to see the masterpiece. On doing so, he ventured to point out that certain parts in his opinion did not suggest the hand of Poussin, but Vandergucht declared that Mr. Benjamin West, who had been indulged with a sight of the picture, had been struck with admiration by its beauty, and had declared it to be the finest and most exalted Poussin in existence. On the strength

of this Desenfans bought *La Vierge aux Enfants* for £700, subject to the condition that Vandergucht should be allowed to exhibit it publicly for six weeks.

Mr. Benjamin West, whose temporising attitude was the subject of severe strictures after the trial, was then called. West said he had considerable difficulty in determining with any degree of certainty and precision whether the picture in question was a real Poussin or not. There was something of Poussin about it, yet it had defects which were unknown to him. The characters were gross, the Madonna's head was too large ; the children's heads wanted that grace and correctness of outline for which Poussin was so conspicuous—and yet the features had something of that master. If the picture were a Poussin it must have been painted when he was studying Titian, from whom one figure, the Cupid sitting on the drapery, was almost a copy. Examined further, Mr. West admitted that he might have said flattering things about the picture to Mr. Vandergucht, for it was a maxim with him never to condemn when he could not applaud ; but he "faintly denied" that he had ever professed great admiration for it or positively declared it to be an undoubted Poussin.

The next witness was a well-known patron of the arts at that period, Dr. Hinchliffe, Bishop of Peterborough, who had not long before commissioned West to paint an altar-piece for the chapel of Trinity College, Cambridge. It was for Dr. Hinchliffe that J. T. Smith made the copies of Rembrandt's etchings that were shown to Gainsborough, and secured for the young student the privilege of admission to the painter's studio. The Bishop thought that the picture sold by Vandergucht was a Poussin, but modestly desired that no reliance might be placed on his judgment, as he had frequently found himself deceived in judging of the works of the different masters. He had, however, a particular acquaintance with the works of Poussin, and while believing the picture in dispute to

be an original admitted that it was in no way comparable to an undoubted Poussin with the same title in the collection of the Duke of Devonshire.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, who had been subpœnaed, was to have succeeded the Bishop. His name was called in court, but there was no reply, and after a brief interval Gainsborough was summoned and stepped into the box.

"Mr. Gainsborough declared that, having had no opportunity for the study, he was no judge of the hands of the Masters. He said, however, that he had seen and studied most of the celebrated works of Poussin, and that he had always been charmed with the sweet simplicity of the effect and the elegance of the drawing, but that when he saw the present picture it produced no emotion. On a closer inspection he found it to be so deficient in harmony, taste, ease, and elegance, that if he had seen it in a broker's shop and could have bought it for five shillings he should not have done so. On being questioned whether something more than bare inspection by the eye was necessary for a judge of pictures, Mr. Gainsborough said he conceived the eye of a painter to be equal to the tongue of a lawyer."

After Gainsborough followed his next door neighbour in Pall Mall, Richard Cosway, R.A., who, condemning the picture on the whole, admitted that there were certain portions of it that might at a distance be taken for the work of Poussin. To Cosway succeeded Mr. Udney, the connoisseur who had sold to the Empress of Russia for £25,000 a collection of pictures which he said he had bought entirely on his own judgment. He had some doubt, but would not have bought the picture as a Poussin. Mr. William Bailey, the expert by whose advice Lord Bute had purchased his collection, said he did not think much of the opinion of painters in these matters as a rule, although he agreed with most of them about the picture under discussion. "There are many ingenious painters," said Mr. Bailey scornfully, "who

are no connoisseurs." Mr. John Singleton Copley, R.A., would not say that *La Vierge aux Enfants* was not a Poussin, but thought it an inferior picture; and after several other artists and experts had been called, including Mr. Joseph Farington, R.A., who did not answer, Vandergucht's counsel made an amusing speech, in the course of which he quoted Sterne: "Of all cants in this canting world, though the cant of hypocrisy be the worst, yet the cant of criticism is the most tormenting."

He then called his witnesses, but they showed poorly in comparison with those on the opposite side. Two French picture dealers from Paris, one of whom was the husband of Madame Vigée Le Brun, gave evidence as to the high opinion of *La Vierge aux Enfants* that existed among the experts of that city; and Mr. William Hodges, R.A., and Mr. Walton, a pupil of Zoffany, expressed their opinions that the Poussin was a genuine work. Mr. Justice Buller, in summing up the case, left it to the jury upon the single point whether the picture was or was not a Poussin, and the jury, after a very short deliberation, decided in favour of Desenfans.

According to Edward Edwards, A.R.A., in his *Anecdotes of Painters*, Sir Joshua Reynolds gave it as his private opinion that the picture was original, but he was not subpœnaed owing to some misunderstanding which had occurred between him and Vandergucht prior to the litigation. The misunderstanding might well have been over the affair of the Earl of Upper Ossory's Titian, but the report of the trial throws some doubt upon the accuracy of the statement by Edwards. It shows clearly that Sir Joshua was subpœnaed, and not upon the side of Vandergucht. He was called by Desenfans.

The *Morning Herald* published some amusing comments on the evidence, especially upon that of Benjamin West, whose conduct is described as strictly that of an American Loyalist, ready to join in turn the standard either of King or Congress.

"Never yet was anything half so sceptical. 'Turn it,' says Mr. West to the man who had the picture in court, 'a little towards me. And now from me. 'Tis very like Poussin—'Tis very unlike Poussin'—and thus was an alternate preponderation in favour of and against the picture kept up to the embarrassment of all who had ears to hear the witness and eyes to see the picture. Mr. West understands this sort of light and shade as well as anybody, and, like Polonius, can convert 'a whale to a camel, and a camel to an ouzel—yea, a black ouzel.'"

Gainsborough's reply to the counsel in cross-examination is noticed with admiration, and a version of it given which differs slightly from those of Northcote and the reporter of the trial:

"His repartee possessed that peculiarity of genius and fancy for which his conversation is so remarkable. He was asked 'whether he thought there was not something necessary besides the eye to regulate an artist's opinion respecting a picture?' His reply was 'that he believed the veracity and integrity of a painter's eye was at least equal to a pleader's tongue.'"

It has been supposed that Gainsborough never visited the Continent, but he said at the trial that although no judge of the Masters he had seen most of the celebrated works of Poussin. This implied that he had travelled abroad, and a visit to Flanders is mentioned in a note published ten years after his death in the *Whitehall Evening Review*, which says of Gainsborough, "This ingenious artist, one of the greatest honours of the English School of Painting, used to say, comically enough, of florid Gothic architecture that it was like a cake *all plumbs*. The enthusiasm that he felt in the churches when he went to Flanders he compared nearly to insanity—'the union,' added he, 'of fine paintings, fine music, and the awful and imposing solemnities of religion.'" The statement in the *Whitehall Evening Review* receives some support from the fact that Mrs. Gains-

borough sold for ten guineas, in 1797, a copy by her husband of one of the Antwerp masterpieces—"Descent from the Cross after the celebrated one of Rubens."

A fortnight after the trial Gainsborough sustained an irreparable loss by the death of his friend Abel. He writes to Bate on the afternoon of June 20 :

"Poor Abel died about one o'clock to-day, without pain, after three days sleep. Your regret, I am sure, will follow this loss. We love a genius for what he leaves and we mourn him for what he takes away. If Abel was not so great a man as Handel it was because caprice had ruined music before he ever took up the pen. For my part I shall never cease looking up to heaven—the little while I have to stay behind—in hopes of getting one more glance of the man I loved from the moment I heard him touch the string. Poor Abel!—'tis not a week since we were gay together, and that he wrote the sweetest air I have in my collection of his happiest thoughts. My heart is too full to say more."

The following day in the *Morning Herald* Bate published a brief article on the musician's death ; quoting a few words of the letter from Gainsborough, to whom, he says, "Abel's attachment was unexampled."

Contemporary authorities agree in assigning a high place in his profession to Abel, and William Jackson declares that he had more real ability than any other musician of his class. The extraordinary effect of his music upon Gainsborough is described in another chapter, composed of anecdotes concerning the painter and his friends. Gainsborough, who had made the musician's acquaintance at Bath, exhibited his portrait in 1777, the first year that he contributed to the Royal Academy after settling in London. Abel, it will be remembered, was with Gainsborough when he was robbed by highwaymen in the summer of 1775.

The Prince of Wales now renewed his promise to sit again for the two portraits of him that Gainsborough

had commenced. One of these was the equestrian portrait, already mentioned, for which Mr. Coke had given the commission two years and a half before. In all this time it had not been carried very far, as the question of the costume was still undecided, and it seemed likely that "slight martial attire, with a mantle of the Knight of the Garter over it," would be chosen instead of the armour originally designed. Unfortunately the Prince gave either no more sittings or not enough, and both Mr. Coke's portrait and its companion (intended for some person of distinction whose name was not made public) were left unfinished at Gainsborough's death. It would be interesting to know what became of them, for it is said that each "though just proceeded on, contained proofs of astonishing likeness." Of the portrait painted for Mr. Coke nothing is known at Holkham, nor of the commission that led to its commencement.

Sir Francis Sykes, of Basildon, Berks, a retired Indian Governor who had been created a baronet a few years before, was sitting at Schomberg House this summer. Another portrait in hand at the same time was that of Mr. Knapp, the Clerk to the Haberdashers' Company, which is said to be "excellent in all its qualities, and likely to be a charming ornament to the City Hall in which it is to be fixed." Mr. Knapp's portrait still adorns the Hall of the Haberdashers' Company, where it was placed after leaving the painter's studio. It was lent for exhibition at the Society of British Artists in 1834. In common with the other pictures in the Hall it was afterwards neglected, and many years ago was described by a writer in the *Art Journal* as "repulsive in appearance from coats of discoloured varnish." Now, cleaned, and free from these superincumbent coverings, it hangs in the Haberdashers' Hall an interesting example of Gainsborough's last period.

Jerome Knapp had been Clerk to the Haberdashers'

Company for thirty-two years, when, in November, 1786, it was decided at a meeting of the Court of Assistants to acknowledge his services by an increase of salary and by hanging a full-length portrait of him in the hall of the company. The portrait was to be executed by "the most eminent portrait-painter," but the expense was not to exceed a hundred guineas, exclusive of a Carlo Maratti frame. The most eminent portrait-painters of the time were, of course, Reynolds and Gainsborough, both of whom, however, charged more for a full-length than the sum proposed. Apparently the Company increased its offer, as Gainsborough accepted the commission for a hundred and twenty guineas in February, 1787, just before he raised his price for a full-length to the maximum of a hundred and sixty guineas. The portrait was finished early in June, and some interesting extracts from the Company's acount books for 1787, which Mr. Eagleton, the present Clerk, was kind enough to send me, give the dates of the payment for the picture and the frame:

"September 5th. Paid Mr. Gainsborough for painting Mr. Knapp's picture pursuant to order at Court of Assistants on the 14th of February 1787. £126 0 0.

"September 28th. Paid Mr. Flaxman, Carver and Gilder, for the frame to Mr. Knapp's picture, pursuant to order of Court. £16 12 2."

The minutes of the Court of Assistants show that Gainsborough altered the portrait after its completion, but not because of any fault in the likeness or painting. Mr. Knapp is shown holding a paper in his hand addressed to the Master and Wardens of the Company, and on this it is supposed that some too presumptuous Haberdasher —who had perhaps conducted the negotiations with Gainsborough—had caused his own name to be inscribed. The minutes of September 19, 1787, a fortnight after the payment was made to the artist, contain the following record:

THE WOODMAN

From the engraving by Simon

"Upon motion made and seconded, the order respecting the painting Mr. Knapp's picture, dating the 10th November, 1786, was read, and it being observed that an inscription had been painted by the direction of Mr. Joseph Malpas, in which his name was inserted without any authority from this Company it was moved, seconded, and carried in the affirmative that the whole of the said inscription be erased from the picture, and Mr. Knapp was directed to apply to Mr. Gainsborough for that purpose."

The portrait of Mr. John Smith, Clerk to the Drapers' Company from 1773 to 1797, now hanging in the Drapers' Hall, was also completed in 1787.

In June Gainsborough was painting *The Woodman*, the work which he believed to be his best, and the one which, in the pathetic letter written from his deathbed, he professed himself anxious for Sir Joshua to see. This *Woodman*, the most important of several pictures by Gainsborough to which the title has been applied, was already in an advanced state in the third week of June, and received the last touches from his brush in the following month. Bate, when describing the picture in July, tells us something of the man whose appearance inspired Gainsborough to paint him. He says:

"This wonderful memorial of genius is a portrait, the original being a poor smith worn out by labour, and now a pensioner upon accidental charity. Mr. Gainsborough was struck with his careworn aspect and took him home; he enabled the needy wanderer by his generosity to live—and made him immortal by his art! He painted him in the character of a woodman; and to account for his dejected visage introduced a violent storm. He appears sheltering under a tree; at a small distance in the background his cottage is seen. The action of his dog, who is starting with his head reversed, is well expressive of a momentary burst of thunder. A brilliancy of colour on the woodman's rustic weeds is also descriptive of the lightning's flash."

Side by side with *The Woodman* another well-known

canvas was advancing towards completion in the studio at Schomberg House. This was the group, now in the collection of Lord Rothschild, containing the portraits of the four children of the first Earl of Romney, and known to-day as *The Marsham Family*. These children—Charles afterwards second Lord Romney, and his three younger sisters—were painted in July, and represented gathering fruit in an orchard. The dog shown in the foreground is a portrait of one of their pets, Fidèle.

The eldest of the three girls, Frances, the one who holds the cherries in her apron, must, I think, have been the last to survive of Gainsborough's sitters. It seems astonishing that there are people of middle age who have seen and spoken to a woman who sat to Gainsborough, but Frances Marsham, who was in her ninth year when this picture was painted, lived to be ninety, and died in June, 1868. She was married in 1805 to Sir John Buchanan-Riddell, whom she survived nearly fifty years.

The incessant eulogy of Gainsborough in the *Morning Herald*, although in the main not undeserved, did not fail to cause some irritation among artists who were less favoured. This irritation shows itself at times in comments published in other journals. A remarkable instance is an article that appeared in the summer of 1787 in the *World*, the paper whose critic Bate had reproved in January for presuming to compare Romney with his adored painter of Pall Mall. It shows that Gainsborough was at this time on bad terms with De Loutherbourg, whose scenic effects he admired in earlier years. The ill-feeling between the two painters originated perhaps in connection with the Academy's refusal in 1784 to hang the group of the three Princesses as Gainsborough wished, for De Loutherbourg, according to the *Morning Post*, was on the Council that year. Two months before this article appeared in the *World*, the *Morning Herald*, in a review

of the Royal Academy, had criticised unfavourably De Loutherbourg's picture, *View of Snowdon from Llanberis Lake*, and at the same time expressed the opinion that Gainsborough's studies of the Lakes were attempts that would never be surpassed. Apparently there was not much to find fault with in this criticism, but taken in conjunction with the following paragraph published in the *Morning Herald* in July, it seems to have given great offence.

"Mr. Loutherbourg has quitted the country, and has left numbers to criticise of the effects of his distances who have hitherto been pleased with his foreground."

The offending paragraph was reprinted a day or two later in the *World*, at the head of an article signed "Tycho," which ran as follows:

"If the above paragraph (which appeared in the *Herald* of last Saturday) has any meaning at all it is to convey a reflection that Mr. De Loutherbourg has quitted this country in an underhand manner and means not to return. In respect to the first part, Mr. De Loutherbourg has acquired by talent and industry a fortune, if not so brilliant as the Rev. Reputation Butcher's, at least competent to satisfy fully every person who has any demand on him; and who have only to apply at his house in Hammersmith for that purpose. The plain truth is engravers are the principal employers of the painters of the present day (formerly Princes and the Nobility were the patrons!); and in consequence of an engagement with one of the most ingenious artists in Europe, Mr. Michel, the engraver of Basle, Mr. De Loutherbourg has gone to paint the lakes of Geneva—a subject which seems so peculiarly adapted to the brilliancy of Mr. De Loutherbourg's pencil as to reflect the highest honour on the judgment of his employer.

"Mr. De Loutherbourg has, on no other account than this (*pro tempore*) quitted England, a place to which he is attached by inclination, where he is honoured with the applause of the best judges, and where he has friends who will not see the assassin's dagger lifted up to stab his reputation in his absence without attempting to ward off the blow. The quarter all these attacks come from

is well known, and the cause of them at some future time shall be given to the *World*;* and sorry are we to see one artist of rank suffer his *mercenary* literary friend to be the HERALD of his fame and in the same column to be the calumniator of a brother artist's reputation.

" TYCHO.

" * The artist alluded to is always puffed in the same page Mr. De Loutherbourg is abused in."

The editor of the *Morning Herald* was a dangerous person to quarrel with, and the last man to overlook such an attack as this. What he said or did at the office of the *World* is not recorded, but an apology appeared promptly in the columns of that journal. In this it was explained that the article signed " Tycho " was sent to the paper as an advertisement and paid for accordingly. However, the editor of the *World* had authority to say that the insinuations against a reverend gentlemen as the supposed writer of an article on the ingenious Mr. De Loutherbourg were unmerited. So far from detracting from the merits of Mr. De Loutherbourg he was an admirer of that artist's professional talents, and further he had not for some time past taken an active part in the conduct of the *Morning Herald*.

The fact was that Bate was now a wealthy man, and was doing by deputy as much as possible of his journalistic work. He had recently inherited a fortune, and the *Morning Herald*, of which he was sole proprietor as well as editor, had grown into a valuable property. Naturally a sportsman, and of the most hospitable disposition, he was enjoying the life of a rich country squire on his estate at Bradwell in Essex, where he was recognised as a magistrate whose activity and attention to his honorary duties were unequalled in the locality, and, according to Arthur Young, as " the most distinguished cultivator in Essex." Bradwell is a lonely parish in the north-eastern part of the county, bounded on three sides by the sea and the estuary of the Blackwater River. Bate had some

years earlier purchased the next presentation to the valuable living of Bradwell, a purchase that subsequently cost him much trouble and litigation. He built himself a house and spent large sums in recovering land from the sea (for which he was awarded the gold medal of the Society of Arts), and in improving the roads in the neighbourhood. There are constant references in the journals of the period to the coursing meetings, yacht races, and "florists' feasts," at which he offered prizes for competition. He had among other things a great decoy at Bradwell, and it was announced that in one frost alone he had captured ten thousand wild ducks. There were many visitors to Bradwell in the summer months, and one of them paid a tribute in verse to the hospitality and good humour of the master of the house, which was printed in the *Universal Magazine:*

"To the mansion of Bradwell, its meadows and bowers,
Where the heart deem'd for minutes what time meant for hours
I inscribe this rude verse. . . .

What charms have I known the blest morning restore
As it broke on the sea which surrounds Bradwell's shore
When the far-distant sail on the sight perfect grew,
And the Isle of fair Mersea just rose to the view,
And while the shrill sea-birds in many a flight
Ascended to sport in the new-risen light!

But hail to the roof which received us at night,
Where the laugh went around and each look spoke delight!
A sadness indeed sometimes darkened the mind;
For the owner was absent!—And what left behind
Could atone for that loss?—But at praise I've no hit,
Or I'd prove his good nature exceeded his wit."

The experiment of controlling a daily paper from a remote part of Essex, even with the frequent visits to London that were perhaps the absences his guest laments, was not altogether successful, and the editor was soon afterwards obliged actively to resume the duties of his office. But whether he directed the fortunes of the

Morning Herald from Bradwell or from Catherine Street, the interests of Gainsborough were never overlooked. The painter, after the episode of the *World* article, was pushed more than ever in the columns of the *Herald*, and there is some reason for thinking that he was a visitor to Bradwell in the year of which I am writing. Gainsborough's portrait of Bate's wife (the *Lady Bate-Dudley* now in Lady Burton's collection) was painted in the summer of 1787, and there is a tradition that this was done at Bradwell.

Two commissions of an uncommon kind were accepted in July. One, of which I have found no other record, was from General Sloper, who, says Bate, wanted Gainsborough to paint "an interview between the late amiable Mrs. Sloper, who is to be *spiritualised* in the representation, and her two surviving daughters." The other commission was given by the Duke of Montague, who wished for a full-length portrait of himself, to be painted, not from life, but from a half-length belonging to the Duchess of Buccleuch, and executed by Gainsborough some years earlier. It will be remembered that a similar task was accomplished by him in 1776 when he painted from a half-length by Hudson the full-length portrait of Lord Folkestone that belongs to the Society of Arts. Other portraits finished by the end of the summer of 1787 were those of Mr. Langston, the Marquis of Buckingham (painted in his Garter robes), and Mr. Pitt. The portraits of the Marquis and of Pitt were both intended for Stowe.

The Duke of York, the only member of the Royal Family who had not been painted by Gainsborough, made arrangements in October to give sittings to the artist for a full-length portrait to hang in the State Room at Carlton House. Late in November it is announced that the Duke "has done Mr. Gainsborough the honour to sit for two portraits; one of these is for Her Majesty, and the other for that distinguished patron of pictorial

genius, the Prince of Wales." But this announcement seems to have been made prematurely. Probably the Duke had promised to come to Schomberg House and afterwards altered his plans, for at the end of December another statement appears to the effect that his Highness "is within a few days to sit to Mr. Gainsborough for the two portraits which we some time since mentioned." However, there is no further mention of a sitting, and eight months afterwards, in his obituary notice of Gainsborough, Bate makes it clear that the portraits—even if commenced—were never completed. He says: "All our living Princes and Princesses were painted by him—the Duke of York excepted, of whom he had three pictures bespoken."

A note by the same writer in November, 1787, gives us the date of a picture about which there has been much speculation among connoisseurs and experts. Sir Walter Armstrong has ascribed the *Wood Gatherers* (originally called *Cottage Children*) to some time in Gainsborough's Bath period, but it proves to have been one of the last works from his brush. After a visit to the studio at Schomberg House, Bate says:

"A landscape of uncommon merit has been painted lately by Mr. Gainsborough. It is a picturesque scene, and although limited in extent of country is beautifully romantic. It contains a rustic history that cannot fail to impart delight to every beholder. Three peasant children are introduced; one of them, a young girl, has an infant brother in her arms; the other, a little boy of about six years, appears to have been engaged in the task of collecting the broken branches of trees for firewood; he is resting on a bank in conversation with his sister. A pastoral innocence and native sensibility give inexpressible beauty to these charming little objects. They cannot be viewed without the sensations of tenderness and pleasure, and an interest for their humble fate. This picture, we learn, has been sold to Lord Porchester at a high price, but as we hope to obtain another view of it before it is sent to the mansion of the noble possessor,

we will make such mention of it as may give some additional idea of its merits."

A few days later the picture was seen by the King, who paid Lord Porchester a high compliment upon his taste in selecting such an admirable work. Lord Porchester, afterwards created Earl of Carnarvon, was the great-great-grandfather of the present peer of that name, and the canvas purchased in 1787 is still at Highclere.

This picture, the *Cottage Children*, as it was then called, is the one I have already mentioned as ranked by Hazlitt before the more famous *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*. Hazlitt, who saw them together at the exhibition of Gainsborough's pictures at the British Institution—an exhibition which he reviewed in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1814—says:

"Of the fancy pictures, on which Gainsborough's fame chiefly rests, we are disposed to give the preference to his *Cottage Children*. There is, we apprehend, greater truth, variety, force, and character in this group than in any other. The colouring of the light-haired child is particularly true to nature, and forms a natural and innocent contrast to the dark complexion of the elder sister who is carrying it."

A sketch or study for this picture is in the National Gallery. It forms part of the Vernon Collection.

The boy, who is seen in the foreground of the *Cottage Children* or *Wood Gatherers*, appears to be none other than the Richmond child, Jack Hill, whom Gainsborough painted several times, and whom his daughter is said to have wished to adopt. Gainsborough, immediately after selling the *Cottage Children*, commenced another study of rustic life, and in December we are told,—"The Boy who is the subject of Lord Porchester's admirable landscape has been introduced in another picture. The scene is a cottage fireside on a frosty winter morning. The Boy seems to derive the most gratifying pleasure from the heat, although it appears to be more than he

can well bear." This picture is the one afterwards known as *Jack Hill in his Cottage*, and the companion to it, showing the same boy with a cat, in the open air, was painted at the same time. "We must notice the boy and cat," writes a critic, "it is a natural representation, and a picture that will live for ever as a chaste and beautiful effort of the art." Small versions of both these studies of Jack Hill were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885; and larger ones at the Academy Old Masters in 1883. The measurements of the larger ones correspond almost exactly with those of the originals which were included in the sale at Gainsborough's house in 1789. The artist Briggs, Margaret Gainsborough's Acton friend, asserted in a letter written in 1829, that *John Hill Warming Himself*, as he calls the cottage picture, had been practically destroyed, "cracked and split to pieces, but filled up, repaired, and daubed all over by Bigg." William Bigg, R.A., who is accused, rightly or wrongly, of this act of vandalism, was a contemporary, and to some extent a follower of Gainsborough.

Although he had refused to paint for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, Gainsborough accepted a commission late in the autumn of 1787 from Macklin, who was planning an exhibition of pictures illustrating the British poets. Gainsborough was busy too at this time in many other ways, and produced, in addition to portraits, a landscape with figures of peasants and a dog, and a donkey laden with firewood. The landscape did not entirely please his friend of the *Morning Herald*, who seems to have been disappointed that the artist had not ennobled the donkey as he did most of the human beings that he painted.

"The peasants and the dog merit praise, but the ass can not be complimented for that superiority of character which generally belongs to Mr. Gainsborough's animals. It appears as if the artist in his adherence to nature had really painted the animal as it presented itself to his

notice, with more than the common portion of misery which falls to that class of the brute creation."

It seems likely that this was the picture purchased by Lady Hoare at Gainsborough's sale in 1789. Another work accomplished in the autumn of 1787 was the retouching and improving of a landscape with figures of a somewhat earlier date, the description of which corresponds to that of *The Beggars*, exhibited at Gainsborough's house in 1784.

The portraits in the studio at the end of December included those of Mrs. Welbore Ellis (Lady Mendip), and a beautiful Irishwoman, Mrs. Pujet of Dublin, the daughter of the Bishop of Raphoe. "Mrs. Pujet," declared Bate, always appreciative of feminine charms, "has had her portrait exquisitely painted by Mr. Gainsborough. The canvas seems to possess the animation of nature—never yet was a picture more like life."

Although no longer contributing to the Academy, Gainsborough was not unconscious of the advantages of exhibiting with more publicity than his own gallery afforded. The Liverpool Society for promoting the Arts of Painting and Design held an exhibition in the autumn of 1787, and to it Gainsborough sent *A Village Girl with Milk* and *Cottage Children*. As the original version of *Cottage Children*, described earlier in this chapter, was purchased by Lord Porchester immediately after it was painted, it is likely that the picture sent to Liverpool was the small preliminary study now in the National Gallery.

There were signs in the autumn of the development of a more friendly feeling towards the Academy, which suggested that a reconciliation between Gainsborough and his fellow-members was not impossible. The records preserved at Burlington House show that he offered at this time, through his friend Edmund Garvey, R.A., "to paint a picture for the chimney in the Council Room in the place of that formerly proposed to be painted by

Mr. Cipriani." This was indeed heaping coals of fire on the heads of the Forty, for the placing of Lady Horatia Waldegrave's portrait on the chimney-board of the Large Room in 1783 was really the beginning of Gainsborough's final quarrel with the Academicians.

The offer to paint the chimney-picture was made in September, and there are later indications that Gainsborough, had he lived longer, might have reappeared among the exhibitors at Somerset House. In December, for the first time since the great quarrel about the picture of the Princesses, he took part in an Academy election, and he was again a voter in March, 1788, when John Russell was promoted to full membership.

It is certain that although Gainsborough presented no diploma picture, he meant to add a specimen of his work to the collection which was being formed at Somerset House. When Margaret Gainsborough gave the Academicians the *Romantic Landscape with Sheep at a Fountain* that now hangs in the Diploma Gallery, Bate, in announcing her gift said that she made it " in compliance with the intention of her late father." The minutes of the Council show that the picture was received with much pleasure by the Academicians who, as an expression of their gratitude for " so inestimable an addition to their collection, and as a mark of the high respect they have for the Memory of her Father," bestowed upon Miss Gainsborough a silver cup, suitably inscribed, which cost £69, 17*s.* 10*d.* The well-known portrait of Gainsborough by himself, now in the Council Room at Burlington House, was also presented to the Academy by Miss Gainsborough, but at a much later period.

CHAPTER XVI

LONDON, 1788

The King and the *Woodman*—A remarkable letter—Gainsborough tells the story of his first picture—The *Cornard Wood* in the National Gallery—Constable's uncle—Macklin's "Poet's Gallery" Boy or Girl?—Lady Petre's portrait—The Duke of Norfolk —The trial of Warren Hastings—Gainsborough's illness—Dr. Heberden's opinion—A hopeful verdict—Gainsborough makes his will—Paints a landscape—Richmond—A vain hope—He returns to die—The interview with Reynolds—Gainsborough shows him his pictures—Thinks he may yet finish them—Death and funeral—The Will—Mrs. Gainsborough's savings—A simple tomb—His last portrait—The widow advised by Reynolds and West—Forged pictures—Bate and the Academicians—Fuseli.

THE last year of the great painter's life opened auspiciously, for in January he was summoned to Buckingham House. The King, who was always interested in Gainsborough's work, had heard rumours of the fine qualities of the newly painted *Woodman*, and wished to see it. The artist took the *Woodman* to Buckingham House, where it was duly admired by the Royal Family, and above all by the King, who described the picture as "a masterpiece of the pencil." Unfortunately he did not buy it, although stories were afloat that he intended to do so.

Early in the spring of 1788 Gainsborough wrote the letter to which I referred in the opening chapter of this book. It is a letter in which he describes the origin and history of the first important picture from his hand, the landscape known to an earlier generation as *Gainsborough's Forest*, but now catalogued at the National Gallery as *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*. It was the painting of this landscape that induced Gainsborough's father to send his son to study art in London. The letter

was written in connection with a sale of pictures, of which *Gainsborough's Forest* was one.

On the 8th of March, 1788, Greenwood, the American artist, who had abandoned the brush in favour of the hammer and was now a successful auctioneer, sold at his rooms in Leicester Square the collection of paintings formed by Mr. Richard Morrison, a gentleman who had a house in Great Portland Street, but was leaving London to live in the country. Accordingly he was disposing of his library and of his pictures, among which was "particularly, very capital . . . a Landscape by Mr. Gainsborough, it is presumed has no equal." The sale of this picture attracted some attention, and Bate, always anxious to obtain news of Gainsborough's work, wrote to him for information about the matter. He embodied the artist's reply in an article that is in part composed of Gainsborough's own words:

"MR. GAINSBOROUGH.

"A Landscape by this distinguished artist having been lately purchased by Alderman Boydell, for seventy-five guineas, it may not be unacceptable to mention a curious anecdote relative to it which cannot fail but to enhance the value.

"This is one of the first pictures Mr. Gainsborough produced; he painted it at Sudbury in the year 1748, at which time he was a schoolboy. This early proof of genius determined his father to send him to London to study, but he appears to have found a preferable school in sequestered nooks, woody uplands, retired cottages, the avenues of a forest, sheep, cattle, villagers, and woodmen. These were the true sources for the cultivation of a mind so strongly impregnated with the seeds of fine fancy attached to the wild beauties of nature; and whose inclination for landscape was drawn forth by these rustic objects rather than by the example of any master whatsoever. It may be worth remark that though there is no great idea of composition in this picture, the touch and close imitation in the study of the parts and *minutiæ* are equal to any of Mr. Gains-

borough's later productions. We must also observe that this picture has been eagerly sought for, and been at intervals in the possession of various dealers for the last forty years."

A comparison of this article with the letter itself, which Bate published after Gainsborough's death, shows that the journalist has not altogether grasped the artist's meaning. Gainsborough does not mean that he painted the picture "in the year 1748, at which time he was still a schoolboy." He began the picture when a schoolboy, and the ability he displayed in it induced his father to send him to London to study, but in 1748, when it was finished and sent upon its travels, he was a married man of one-and-twenty. The letter is of singular interest and value, for it is the only known record, written by his own hand, of the beginning of Gainsborough's career as a painter. It shows, too, that Gainsborough was still living at Sudbury in 1748—a year or two later than has hitherto been supposed. The letter was printed by Bate, with an introductory note, as follows:

"Graphic Genius.

"A very early instance of Gainsborough's powers in landscape is to be seen in the fine picture Alderman Boydell purchased. This charming performance possesses all the brilliancy and freshness of a picture just from the easel, and yet, astonishing as it may appear, it has been painted upwards of forty years. The following letter was written by Mr. Gainsborough upon the subject, and as it decides upon the point of time when the picture was finished, we are happy to publish it as a proof of the extraordinary skill of this self-taught artist while under the age of twenty, and as a proof that the magical effect and brilliancy of his landscapes does not evaporate.

"My dear Sir,—You have thanked me handsomely for what has not been handsomely done, but I intend you shall have something better soon.

"Mr. Boydell bought the large landscape you speak

WOOD SCENE, VILLAGE OF CORNARD, SUFFOLK

National Gallery

of for seventy-five guineas last week at Greenwood's. It is in some respects a little in the *schoolboy stile*—but I do not reflect on this without a secret gratification; for, as an early instance how strong my inclination stood for Landskip, this picture was actually painted at Sudbury in the year 1748; it was begun *before I left school*;—and was the means of my Father's sending me to London.

"It may be worth remark that though there is very little idea of composition in the picture, the touch and closeness to nature in the study of the parts and *minutiæ* are equal to any of my latter productions. In this explanation I do not wish to seem vain or ridiculous, but do not look on the Landskip as one of my riper performances.

"It is full forty years since it was first delivered by me to go in search of those who had *taste* to admire it! Within that time it has been in the hands of twenty picture dealers, and I once bought it myself during that interval for *Nineteen Guineas*. Is not that curious?—Yours, my dear Sir, most sincerely,

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH."

"PALL MALL, *March* 11, 1788."

A footnote to this letter, printed in the *Morning Herald*, explains that the matter referred to by Gainsborough in the opening paragraph was a present of some drawings. These are perhaps the seven sketches of landscapes in chalk, presented to the National Gallery in 1878 by Mr. Thomas Birch Wolfe, the nephew of Sir Henry Bate-Dudley. Gainsborough's letter was forwarded to Boydell immediately after its publication, in order that he might know the exact history of the picture to which it refers.

Boydell no doubt bought the landscape with a view to preparing the engraving in aquatint by Mary Catherine Prestel, which was published in 1790. The landscape was on view when the Boydells opened the Shakespeare Gallery early in that year, and was noticed particularly in the *Gazetteer* by a critic whose comparison of the honest realism of Gainsborough's picture with the conventionalities of some other contemporary landscapes is not without interest.

Writing in May, 1790, he says :

"Many of our landscape painters have made their pictures by a receipt. Never having lived out of the metropolis or seen any green thing except a pickled cucumber in an oil shop, they form their ideas upon the style of the old Flemish masters, copy their trees from Hobbema, their water from Ruysdael, and their docks and weeds from Wynants. Very different was the conduct of Mr. Gainsborough when he painted his landscape. The woods of Suffolk were his Academy, the trees were his models ; and instead of casts from Grecian statues, the sunburnt inhabitants of his native village were the figures which he contemplated and copied. When he painted this picture he was not twenty years of age, but at this early period he saw and imitated Nature *as she is*, without meditating through the misty medium of former masters. In his later works his aim seems to be giving *general* effects, slight hints at forms to which the eye of the spectator must give names—in one word, to make elegant blots ; and so fascinating was his taste that whatever style he adopted became agreeable.

"But here we see a landscape in which every tree, every bough, one may almost say every leaf, is a portrait. With finishing equal or superior to any of the Flemish school, it has the force of a sketch. The forms of the trees, the bark, the exuberantly rich foreground, the woodmen and peasants, the two asses, are perfectly English, and prove that when Mr. Gainsborough painted cattle or figures he did not apply to prints from Berghem, Cuyp, or Paul Potter, but delineated them from the figures which he saw. The picture is placed too near the eye, in a more elevated situation the distant view of the village in the background would keep its proper distance."

After the death of Alderman Boydell the landscape became the property of Mr. Watts, who lent it for exhibition at the British Institution in 1814, where it was described in the list of Gainsborough's works as *A Woody Scene in his earlier manner*. Mr. Watts, who died in 1816, had one daughter, Mary, who was married in 1811 to Mr. Jesse Russell, sometime Member of Parliament for the pocket borough of Gatton. Mrs. Russell

inherited all her father's property, and her husband by Royal licence adopted the name of Watts in addition to his own. Mr. Watts Russell died at an advanced age in 1875, and at the sale of his pictures in the same year this landscape was purchased for the National Gallery for £1207, 10s. The Watts Russell pictures were sold at Christie's, and the Gainsborough landscape was catalogued as *A Wood Scene with Figures, a View near the Village of Cornard in Suffolk.* The name of Cornard seems therefore to have been attached to the picture for the first time while it was in the Watts Russell collection, but on what grounds it is impossible now to say. The appellation was probably conjectural, for there is nothing in the picture to connect it particularly with the neighbourhood of Cornard, except the spire of the little church, and that might equally well belong to any one of a score of Suffolk villages. Great Cornard itself, whatever it may have been in Gainsborough's time, is now a prosaic and uninteresting suburb of Sudbury.

One point remains to be noted about the landscape which was the starting-point of Gainsborough's career as an artist, and is now by a happy chance in the nation's keeping. It concerns the identity of Mr. Watts, the owner of the picture, after the death of Boydell. His name is mentioned in the National Gallery catalogue and in some of the books on Gainsborough, but no one seems to have suspected that this gentleman was Mr. David Pike Watts, of Portland Place, the uncle, and the staunch friend and supporter of John Constable, R.A. Mr. Watts, whose sister Ann was Constable's mother, helped his nephew in his earlier days both with money and advice, and had sufficient interest with the British Institution to obtain for him an invitation to the great dinner that inaugurated in 1813 the exhibition of the works of Sir Joshua Reynolds. To the exhibition of the following year at the British Institution Mr. Watts contributed his Gainsborough landscape, but Constable says nothing

about it in the letters of that year published in his biography, or of the many other pictures by Gainsborough shown on the same occasion. However, Constable must have been well acquainted with the landscape, as he used to stay with his uncle in Portland Place, and he is not likely to have overlooked a picture by the master whose work he almost worshipped.

In April, 1788, a few weeks after Boydell had purchased the landscape at Greenwood's rooms, Macklin opened his "Poets' Gallery," to which Gainsborough had promised to contribute. He was as good as his word, and the collection of nineteen pictures illustrating passages from the British poets included two from his brush, *Young Hobbinol and Ganderetta*, and *Lavinia*. The first was nominally inspired by Somerville; the second purported to be a representation of the beauteous orphan in Thomson's *Seasons:*

> "The lovely young Lavinia once had friends,
> And fortune smiled deceitful on her birth."

However, Thomson's lines certainly were not responsible for the inspiration of Gainsborough's *Lavinia*, for the work so-called was none other than the study of a child with a pan of milk, already described as painted in 1786. Bate, while praising the picture for its artistic merits, laughs at it as "oddly perverted by Macklin to the *Lavinia* of Thomson," and with some sarcastic allusions to Madame D'Eon, insists more than once that it should be described as the *Cottage Boy*. The artist was well paid for both works. According to some figures published soon after Macklin's death in 1801, Gainsborough received £300 for *Lavinia*, and £350 for *Young Hobbinol, and Ganderetta*.

The beautiful full-length portrait of Lady Petre walking in a wood (now in America, in the collection of Mr. H. E. Huntingdon) was painted in the spring of 1788, and is one of Gainsborough's last works. The

original of this portrait, Miss Juliana Howard, was married to the ninth Lord Petre in January, and on the 24th of March, soon after she had returned from the honeymoon, the announcement was made that the bride "intended sitting to Mr. Gainsborough for her picture." The sittings must have been begun and completed within the four weeks following, as on the 19th of April the chronicler was able to announce that the portrait was finished, and was so beautiful and correct a likeness that it almost rivalled her while it seemed to flatter.

Lady Petre's brother, Mr. Howard, who was also painted in 1788, appears to have commenced his sittings even later than his sister, as in May (after the first public notification of Gainsborough's illness) his portrait is mentioned as being then unfinished, and not satisfactory to the artist in point of attitude. Unfortunately, Mr. Howard's Christian name is not given, and we cannot tell which of Lady Petre's brothers was sitting at Schomberg House. The portrait just mentioned may be the full-length in black of the eldest brother, Bernard Edward, afterwards twelfth Duke of Norfolk, which is now in the possession of the present Duke, who also owns the full-length in black of Duke Charles, to which I have already referred.

It must have been very soon after the completion of Lady Petre's portrait that Gainsborough, on the high tide of success, and painting with undiminished powers, was attacked by the illness which ultimately proved fatal to him. Sir George Beaumont, who knew Gainsborough well, declared that sometime before his illness he had a premonition of death, and begged Sheridan to promise to attend his funeral—as he did. Gainsborough's indisposition began with a chill, caught at Westminster Hall, where all London was flocking in the earlier months of 1788, to hear the speeches in the famous trial of Warren Hastings. All London, that is to say, that could obtain admission to the Hall, which was not easy, for the public anxiety to witness the proceedings was extraordinary, and when

Sheridan was speaking fifty guineas were offered for a good seat. Gainsborough, however, had a friend in court in the person of Sir Peter Burrell, the purchaser of *The Market Cart*. Acting for his wife, Sir Peter, as Deputy Great Chamberlain, had charge of the arrangements connected with the trial, and his name appeared on all the tickets of admission.

It has been assumed, without any apparent ground, that Gainsborough caught cold on the opening day of the trial, February 13th; the day when his rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds, attended in full dress and saluted Fanny Burney from the managers' box, and when the Prince of Wales and his brothers were so chilled by the damp and frigid air of the great Hall that they were compelled to beat a speedy retreat to Alice's Coffee House. But the trial of Warren Hastings, which lasted for years, occupied many weeks of 1788, and it must have been some time after the opening day that Gainsborough, when listening to the impassioned eloquence of his friends, Sheridan and Burke, became conscious of the cold spot on the back of his neck, which was the herald of calamity. According to Allan Cunningham (who in this matter may be relied upon, as his informant was the painter's niece, Mrs. Lane), Gainsborough was taken ill immediately after his return from Westminster Hall. This was probably late in April, as a letter exists written by Gainsborough in that month, in which he speaks of his illness, but hopefully, and says that his physician believes it to be merely a swollen gland. The physician was Dr. Heberden, his next-door neighbour, and one of the most distinguished practitioners of the day, who declared, as Gainsborough states in a letter of May 1st, that he had known many similar swellings dispersed without subsequent mischief.

Yet, in spite of the opinion of Dr. Heberden, which was supported by that of the surgeon John Hunter, there was evident cause for alarm, and the patient himself suspected it. Gainsborough made his will at once, and

that document, carefully drawn up and providing for all contingencies, was signed on the 5th of May. The first public announcement concerning his illness was made four or five days later in the following terms:

"We state with infinite regret that Mr. Gainsborough has been for some weeks past so much indisposed as to be unable to exercise his pencil. His indisposition proceeds from a violent cold caught in Westminster Hall; the glands of his neck have been in consequence so much inflamed as to require the aid of Mr. John Hunter and Dr. Heberden. The friendly attention of the latter is almost without intermission, and from Mr. Hunter's skill it is hoped that ten days or a fortnight may restore him to the practice of that science of which he is so distinguished an ornament."

A few days afterwards he is reported as still indisposed, but able, nevertheless, to paint during his quiet intervals a beautiful little landscape. This landscape was among those sold by Mrs. Gainsborough a year later.

At the end of May Gainsborough's condition had improved sufficiently for him to bear removal from Pall Mall to his house at Richmond, where the air at first did him so much good that there seemed to be some chance of his recovery. Unfortunately the improvement was followed by a relapse; the patient grew steadily worse, and was at last carried back to Pall Mall in a hopeless state. That he himself regarded his condition as desperate is evident from a note of June 15th, in which, however, the firmness of the writing shows that his physical powers were as yet unexhausted:

"It is my strict charge that after my decease no plaster cast, model, or likeness whatever be permitted to be taken. But that if Mr. Sharp, who engraved Mr. Hunter's print, should choose to make a print from the three-quarter sketch which I intended for Mr. Abel, painted by myself, I give free consent.

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH."

After the middle of June the newspapers were silent about the health of Gainsborough, for it was now admitted that his disease was cancer and that he was a doomed man. We know little of what happened at Schomberg House in the long summer days when he lay dying, but his letters included one to Sherwin, written "from that very chamber which afterwards became the chamber of death," to praise the engraver's renderings of Gainsborough's portraits of Lord Buckingham and Lord Sandwich. His friend Kilderbee visited him and heard from his lips expressions of regret about the dissoluteness of his life. But Gainsborough added: "They must take me altogether—liberal, thoughtless, and dissipated." William Jackson of Exeter, for more than twenty years his intimate acquaintance, tells us that he lamented also that his life was finishing just as he was commencing to do something, and to Jackson we owe also the record of his last words, "We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyke is of the party." There is a popular belief that Gainsborough uttered these words in the presence of Reynolds on the occasion of that strange, sad interview between the rivals, of which something is revealed in Sir Joshua's *Fourteenth Discourse*. This belief originated with Allan Cunningham, who says in his life of Gainsborough: "He sent for Reynolds and peace was made between them. Gainsborough exclaimed to Sir Joshua, 'We are all going to Heaven, and Vandyke is of the company,' and immediately expired."

There is, however, no reason to believe that Sir Joshua was present when Gainsborough expired at Schomberg House at two o'clock in the morning of August 2nd, 1788. Reynolds, in the discourse delivered in December of the same year, says that he was invited to "this last interview" some days before Gainsborough died, and it may be assumed that he lost no time in responding to the appeal of the pathetic letter endorsed by him "From

Gainsborough when dying," that is now in the possession of the Royal Academy :

"DEAR SIR JOSHUA,—I am just to write what I fear you will not read—after lying in a dying state for 6 months. The extreme affection which I am informed of by a Friend which Sir Joshua has expresd induces me to beg a last favor, which is to come once under my Roof and look at my things, my woodman you never saw, if what I ask now is not disagreeable to your feeling that I may have the honour to speak to you. I can from a sincere Heart say that I always admired and sincerely loved Sir Joshua Reynolds.

"THO. GAINSBOROUGH."

Gainsborough, who in the weariness of a long drawn out illness, had lost all count of time, was of course mistaken in supposing that he had been dying for six months, and in the original the figure 6 looks as if he had hesitated over and altered it. His letter conveys an idea of greater dejection than he really felt, for, on the 1st of August—the day before his death—he was more hopeful than he had been in June. So far from uttering his last words in Sir Joshua's presence he was well enough to take an interest in his pictures and discuss them with the President when he paid the historic visit to Schomberg House. Gainsborough, on the occasion of that visit, actually had many of his unfinished canvases brought to his bedside to show to Sir Joshua, and flattered himself that he might still live to complete them.

On Monday, August 4th, Bate broke his long silence by announcing that the death of Gainsborough had taken place at two o'clock on the morning of the preceding Saturday ; and he accompanied his statement with a touching obituary of the man in whom he saw nothing but perfection, "one of the greatest geniuses that ever adorned any age or any nation." No other newspaper so far as I know, published an announcement on the 4th of August, but on the 5th the *Morning Post* had a note on

Gainsborough, and the *Morning Chronicle* reprinted in its entirety the article which had appeared in the *Herald* the day before. The comments of the *Morning Post* were friendly, but not too flattering upon the question of Gainsborough's ability. "His talents as an artist were of a very respectable kind, and certainly combined an excellence in two different provinces of his art which the same individual has seldom attained. . . . But, whatever his abilities as a painter, he was eminently distinguished for private virtues, and in the domestic and convivial sphere, without deviating into weakness on the one hand, or excess on the other, possessed the indisputed reputation of strong sensibility and original humour." The *Morning Chronicle* followed up its reprint of Bate's article on Gainsborough by a long and excellent one of its own, written by someone who had known the painter. The articles in the *Morning Herald* and the *Morning Chronicle* were, as I have explained in the preface, the basis of the obituaries in the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *European Magazine*, to which all Gainsborough's later biographers are indebted for much of their information. It is curious that the Ipswich and Bath newspapers published no notes of their own on Gainsborough's death, but were content to reproduce a few paragraphs from London journals.

The simplicity of Gainsborough's obsequies was the subject of many comments by those who did not know that the painter's funeral was unimposing because he wished it to be so. Its arrangements were made in accordance with the instructions contained in a document drawn up by him a few weeks before his death. These arrangements were made solely with a view to giving his family as little trouble as possible. He desired that he might be privately buried in Kew Churchyard, near the grave of his friend, Mr. Kirby; that a stone without either arms or ornament might be placed over him, inscribed with his bare name, and containing space for the names

of such of his family who, after death, might wish to take up their abode with him; that his funeral might be as private as possible, and attended only by a few of those friends he most respected.

In obedience to these injunctions, Gainsborough's body was conveyed to Kew, attended by the chosen mourners, on the Saturday following his death. At the churchyard the six artists who had been invited to act as pall-bearers walked in the following order:

Sir William Chambers	Sir Joshua Reynolds.
Mr. Benjamin West.	Mr. Bartolozzi.
Mr. Paul Sandby.	Mr. Cotes.

Gainsborough Dupont, who followed as chief mourner, was supported by Sheridan; Linley, the musician (the father of Mrs. Sheridan); John Hunter, the famous surgeon, who had attended Gainsborough; Jonathan Buttall, the supposed original of *The Blue Boy;* Mr. Gossett, who was perhaps the modeller in wax whose portrait Gainsborough showed in the Academy of 1780; Mr. Trimmer, the son-in-law of Joshua Kirby, beside whose tomb Gainsborough's grave had been dug; and Jeremiah Meyer, R.A., the miniature painter. Meyer, who lived at Kew, died a few months after Gainsborough, and was buried in a grave immediately adjoining that of the painter, who lies between Meyer and Kirby. It is stated that Sir William Chambers and Benjamin West came up from the country on purpose to attend the funeral, and that "Mr. Burke was to have been one of Mr. Gainsborough's mourners, but for the circumstance of his being at present so far from town."

Fulcher, in describing the closing scene of Gainsborough's life, remarks on the fact that some of the contemporary accounts differ in their statements of the reasons assigned for the artist's death; and he quotes a footnote to the obituary in the *European Magazine* in which it is stated that "Mr. Gainsborough's disorder was

a wen, and not a cancer, as before erroneously stated, which grew internally, and so large as to obstruct the passages. This, it is said, his surgeons knew, but knew at the same time it was fatal to cut it out." This note was copied by the *European Magazine* from the *General Evening Post*, a journal that is also the original authority for the oft-quoted statement that Gainsborough had two portraits of himself in his gallery, " which, with a modesty peculiar to the painter, had their faces turned to the wainscot."

There can, however, be no doubt that cancer was the cause of Gainsborough's death. The accounts of Bate and Thicknesse, both of whom were in close touch with Gainsborough's family at the time, agree on this point ; and there is stronger evidence in the shape of a letter from the painter's niece, Mrs. Lane. This lady, who spent part of her girlhood in Gainsborough's house, and is presumably the niece mentioned by Cunningham as assisting to put flannel round her uncle's throat when he returned from Westminster Hall, says that he died from " cancer in the neck." The accounts of Bate and Thicknesse, while agreeing in attributing the death to cancer, differ as to whether Gainsborough himself knew from what he was suffering. Bate says that the knowledge was kept from him, and that he died ignorant of the cause of his complaint ; but, according to Thicknesse, he only pretended to be ignorant, for the sake of his wife and daughters, from whom he was careful to keep his suspicions secret.

The will was proved on the 23rd of August. It is executed on four sheets of paper, the first three of which are signed, and the fourth signed and sealed by Gainsborough. He names his wife and his elder daughter Margaret executors of his will, and adds : " I earnestly request my old friend and acquaintance, Mr. Samuel Kilderbee of Ipswich, to act as overseer thereof, and to advise and assist my said wife and daughter Margaret in

the execution thereof, which request I trust he will comply with out of our long and uninterrupted friendship which has subsisted between us." In the will the first bequest is one of five hundred pounds to Mrs. Gainsborough, who is also to have all arrears of any annuity or annuities that may be due at the time of her husband's death. This bequest is followed by one to Gainsborough Dupont, subject to conditions which suggest that the relations of the uncle and nephew had not always been cordial. Gainsborough leaves Dupont a hundred pounds in full satisfaction and discharge of all claims or demands he can or may have upon him. If, however, Dupont makes any claim on the estate or effects in respect of work done by him, or on any other account, the legacy of a hundred pounds is revoked, and Mrs. Gainsborough is directed to make a charge upon him for his board, washing, and lodging, and the balance only of the hundred pounds shall then be paid to him. Gainsborough recommends his wife, to whom the contents of the houses in Pall Mall and at Richmond are made over without reserve, to give to Dupont "such of my models, implements, and utensils in the painting business, oils, colours, varnishes, and such like things as she may think useful to him," and to provide him and the two daughters with proper mourning.

Half of his monies and stock in the public funds Gainsborough bequeaths to his daughter Margaret, and the other half in trust to his wife and Margaret jointly, to remain in the same securities at interest. The dividends of the trust fund are to be applied at their discretion for the maintenance of the younger daughter, Mary Fischer (whose eccentricities were perhaps by this time sufficiently developed to prove that she needed guardianship), and in no case is Fischer to be allowed to interfere with her money. It is to be "for her sole and separate use and benefit, notwithstanding her coverture, and shall not be subject to the debts, power, control, or intermeddling of her present or any future husband."

I have been unable to discover at Somerset House the value of Gainsborough's estate, but Mr. A. W. Soward of the Estate Duty Office has kindly given me some information which proves that the painter's family was left better off than Bate and other of his friends imagined. Gainsborough, as we have seen, bequeathed to his wife only five hundred pounds and his furniture and pictures. The pictures sold badly, yet, according to the Somerset House books, Mrs. Gainsborough left property valued at "under £10,000," when she died in 1798. Much of this, no doubt, was accumulated secretly in the lifetime of Gainsborough whose wife, according to Fischer, was "receiver-general, paymaster-general and auditor of her own accompts." Of her saving habits evidence is given in a statement published more than seventy years ago in the *Art Union*, on the authority of "an old and valued friend of the Gainsborough family." The friend declared that Gainsborough on his death-bed was haunted by the fear that through his improvident life his daughters would be left without sufficient provision :

"On this point his gentle wife soothed him by the information that 'as he always threw his money about, leaving it at the mercy of everyone, she had taken in the course of twenty or thirty years as much as had enabled her to save several thousand pounds. With that and the sale of the *Woodman* and other pictures, doubtless their children could subsist in comfort.' He thanked her and blessed her warmly, saying that she had done perfectly right, that it was true that he sometimes thought he had more bills than he found and had been puzzled about it, but never suspected she had made free with what now made his deathbed one of tranquillity and peace."

But in any case Gainsborough's daughters would not have been left entirely without means, as his investments, divided between them, must have amounted to more than £8000. The official records show that Mrs. Fischer's portion (held in trust) was £4,150, invested in 3 per cent. Consolidated Bank Annuities.

The painter's last resting-place was marked, as he desired, by a plain stone bearing his name and age and the date of interment. The same stone still covers him at Kew, but the lettering—then nearly effaced—was recut in 1865 at the expense of the late E. M. Ward, R.A., who at the same time erected in the church a memorial tablet to the artist. The simplicity of Gainsborough's grave was remarked soon after his death by the correspondents of several journals, who could not understand why so great a man should lack a tomb, and the *General Magazine* published some verses *On Visiting the undecorated Grave of Gainsborough*, beginning

> " O'er Gainsborough shall the green turf close
> And not the sculptor's art aspire?
> Shall Nature her own poet lose
> And not be struck the poet's lyre?"

It was as the painter of Nature, using the word in the sense of pastoral scenes and landscapes, that Gainsborough was eulogised by the minor poets in the autumn of 1788. His portraits, which we now regard as his most distinguished works, were almost disregarded by the writers of elegies, of which the following, from the *World*, is one of the best :

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF MR GAINSBOROUGH

Mourn Painting, Mourn ! recline thy drooping head
And fling thy useless palette on the ground,
Gainsborough is numbered with the silent dead
And plaintive sighs from hills and dales resound.

His genius loved his country's native views,
Its taper spires, green lawns and sheltered farms ;
He touched each scene with Nature's genuine hues,
And gave the English landscape all its charms.

Who now shall paint mild evening's tranquil hour,
The cattle slow returning from the plain,
The glow of sultry noon, the transient shower,
The dark brown furrows rich with golden grain.

Bring fragrant violets, crimson poppies bring,
The cornflower glowing with celestial blue,
The yellow primrose, earliest child of spring,
Plucked from the fields which once his pencil drew.

In graceful wreaths entwine their rustic bloom,
That bloom which shames the gardens richest dyes,
And hang these votive garlands round the tomb
Where Nature's Painter, Nature's favourite, lies.

The distinction of being the last portrait painted by Gainsborough has been claimed for several works, but it belongs to a head of Gainsborough Dupont, who no doubt sat when his uncle, though still able to work, was too ill to admit to the studio anyone outside his own household. Mrs. Lane, who owned this portrait, described it as Gainsborough's last work, and said that it was still on his easel when he died. It is probable that this is the portrait of Dupont that was in the collection of the late George Richmond, R.A., and described, when sold at Christie's in 1897, as "the last work of the painter." Sir William Richmond, however, does not know anything of its history, except that Mr. George Richmond bought it some time in the Fifties. This portrait is now in the collection of Lord D'Abernon of Esher. The landscape already referred to as having been painted during the last illness of Gainsborough was sold by his wife a year after his death. A chronicler of 1789 says: "The landscape which received his last touch has been purchased by Mr. Tyrwhitt; it is in a mixed style between Gainsborough's manner and that of Poussin." Mr. Tyrwhitt was a collector who owned several of Gainsborough's works besides this last landscape.

A few days after the funeral some paragraphs appeared stating that all Gainsborough's pictures, except those already bespoken, were to be sold by auction, but these statements proved to be unauthorised. Mrs. Gainsborough was at this time aided by the friendly advice of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Benjamin West, both capable

men of business, who " professed a desire to serve her by any interposition in their power," and she decided not to sell any of her husband's pictures until the following spring, when a plan for their disposal would be proposed.

The announcement of her intention regarding the sale was followed immediately by another concerning the forgers of Gainsborough's drawings, who were already endeavouring to dispose of works purporting to be from his hand. On the authority of Mrs. Gainsborough, Bate stated in the *Morning Herald* that there could not possibly be a single genuine drawing in the hands of any of the dealers. Gainsborough had made it a rule never to accept money for his drawings, and the only ones he had parted with had been bestowed as gifts upon particular friends and " select persons of fashion." It was true that many drawings by him were in existence, but they were in the possession of his widow, and would be disposed of with his other works.

It is difficult to accept without reservation Mrs. Gainsborough's assertion that no drawings could be in the hands of dealers because her husband had never sold any. Jackson says that he gave his drawings away recklessly, and frequently to people who were ignorant of their value, and, as his output was so large (Jackson believed that he had seen at least a thousand drawings from his hand), it does not seem possible that not one was in the market at the time of the painter's death. Mrs. Gainsborough's announcement was perhaps called forth by some notes that had appeared in the *Morning Post.* One of them, published early in September, after praising Gainsborough's drawings in almost extravagant terms, says that they were being sought for with the utmost avidity. " Amongst the most successful amateurs is Mr. Wigstead, who has long possessed some of Gainsborough's most charming efforts, and who has had luck enough to increase his collection very largely since the death of that inimitable

artist." If Mrs. Gainsborough were right, Mr. Wigstead, unless he had obtained gifts from her husband's friends, could only have acquired forgeries in the few weeks that had elapsed since the funeral at Kew.

In how impudent a fashion the imitators of Gainsborough worked can be judged from another paragraph of the same time, also published in the *Morning Post:*

"The slightest sketch from the pencil of the late Gainsborough is now held in great value, and Burton, the actor, whose talent in landscape painting is much respected, and whose dexterity in imitating certain masters in that line is greatly admired, has already been engaged to make copies of many efforts of Gainsborough's beautiful and simple taste. The diffusion of such models cannot be too wide, as the art itself must derive improvement and advantage from multiplying proofs of so chaste and elegant a fancy."

This dexterous imitator of Gainsborough was John Burton, an actor connected with Drury Lane, and an exhibitor at the Royal Academy, where he was usually represented by studies of moonlight effects. Gainsborough had always objected to the copying of his landscapes on the ground that "it affected the sale of new pictures." He wrote thus to Ozias Humphry, R.A., who asked leave to copy some of his works, and said that he had often refused similar applications from his friends.

Although he appreciated Sir Joshua's kindness to Mrs. Gainsborough, the editor of the *Morning Herald* had never forgotten or forgiven the Academy's treatment of his dead hero's portrait group of the *Three Eldest Princesses,* which caused Gainsborough to withdraw his pictures from the Exhibition of 1784. In the November following Gainsborough's death an alleged irregularity in the election of Fuseli to an Associateship gave Bate an opportunity of attacking both the Royal Academy and its President. He reminded them that when Gainsborough, "the greatest ornament of your Academy," requested them a few years

earlier to hang his portrait of the Princesses at the elevation at which it was intended to be placed at Carlton House, his suit was rejected, because it was said to contravene a standing rule which regulated the hanging of full-length portraits, and that to depart from this rule would be a dangerous precedent. This objection was deemed malignant by many. They thought it impossible that the Academy could have been inconvenienced by the hanging of the picture of the illustrious ladies in question—a picture painted for the heir-apparent—at the desired height.

Mr. Gainsborough, continued Bate, made his request because he was anxious that their Majesties might see the portraits of three of their amiable offspring with the most gratifying advantages of situation, and his claim was the more strongly founded because he had painted the picture in question in a tender style, to meet the eye at a trifling elevation, and this at the particular request of the Prince.

"There were, however," said Bate, "those of you who dreaded comparison with this artist, and who became Romans on this occasion. 'Depart from the Academy rules! Impossible!' Mr. Gainsborough withdrew his pictures in consequence, and they were seventeen in number besides the one already mentioned. If your refusal bore at the time, which it did, the construction of being malignant, that censure is established by some late proceedings. And it will appear in the sequel that the laws which you affect to revere are sometimes broken when a petty purpose requires it. I need not remark that it is an annual practice to leave a list open at the Academy for a limited time after the exhibition closes wherein the artists who wish to become Associates may insert their names. The fixed time was this year elapsed, and the list shut when it occurred to Mr. Fuseli to put in his claim for this scarce-desirable honour. But the Book of Graphic Destiny, the Institute of Academical Dignity, was shut for the year, and what was to be done? Mr. Fuseli knew well. He knocked at the President's door, and made his request known. A *deaf ear* was not turned to his demand—Fuseli's branch of the art interferes not with

Sir Joshua—he is not a Gainsborough! 'Pshaw,' said the President, 'never heed the rules. I'll take care of your name.' Accordingly the printed list appeared with Fuseli's name, to the astonishment of all the brethren."

Fuseli, it should be remarked, at this time cared as little for the Academy as Gainsborough had done, and he became a candidate for Associateship for prudential rather than artistic reasons. Disapproving of associated bodies for teaching the fine arts, he had declined membership of some foreign Academies, and, until the autumn of 1788, had refused to put his name down at the Royal Academy, although urged to do so by Sir Joshua himself. But, in the preceding June, he had married Miss Rawlins, of Batheaston, and, being far from opulent, "the consideration of the pension annually granted by the Royal Academy under such circumstances to the widows of the members, overcame his reluctance." He was elected an Associate in November, 1788, and was expected to succeed to the seat left vacant among the Forty by Gainsborough's death. However, he was defeated by Hamilton, who was chosen to fill Gainsborough's place in the following February.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SALE AT SCHOMBERG HOUSE

Gainsborough's Old Masters—The Queen and his drawings—His gifts to Sheridan—Five guineas for a Michael Angelo—Copies by Gainsborough—Bate's advertisement of the sale—Lord Gainsborough buys *The Woodman*—The landscapes—The Duke of Newcastle's purchase—The Duchess of Devonshire—The Queen visits Schomberg House—Buys more drawings and two pictures—Other royal visitors—The Royal Academy offers to buy a picture—The French Ambassador—Sale of Gainsborough's Murillo—Its present possessor—The last day—Seven hundred visitors—Results of the sale—The unlucky *Woodman*—The fire at Exton—Gainsborough's landscapes and their sale—A mistaken idea—More forgers.

In the winter of 1788–9 Mrs. Gainsborough and her nephew, Gainsborough Dupont, arranged at Schomberg House the drawings and the unsold finished paintings by the dead artist, and placed among them on the walls the pictures by Old Masters which he had collected. Early in the spring it was announced that preparations were being made for the disposal of all the pictures Gainsborough had been possessed of, including *The Woodman* and *The Peasant Smoking at his Cottage Door*, and a large number of drawings; and that they would be exhibited "in the very rooms where his animated pencil gave them creation." The King, perhaps, might choose a picture or two, or the Prince of Wales, but except to those great personages, Mrs. Gainsborough would not be prevailed upon to dispose of a single work before the whole collection was open to public view.

It was stated that the pictures by Old Masters to be sold, although not numerous were well chosen, and such a conclusion would be readily made when it was recollected that the works of this description were those which Mr.

Gainsborough had selected and retained in the course of his anxious pursuits after the beauties of the arts. There were many drawings, but if they were multiplied by fifty there was taste enough in the country to cover them all, and, according to Bate, the approaching sale would afford the first opportunity of acquiring by purchase any of these slight but charming examples from the hand of a master who in his lifetime never could be prevailed upon to part with one for money. To this announcement the editor of the *Morning Herald* added some valuable notes upon Gainsborough's drawings. Referring to six of these works that were to be included in the sale, he remarked that they were in coloured chalks and formed part of a set of twelve executed by the artist some years earlier. Lord Mulgrave had then seen this set of drawings, and admired them so much that he offered a hundred guineas for them for the purpose of presenting them to the Queen. Gainsborough, steadfast in his purpose never to sell a drawing, refused the offer, but asked Lord Mulgrave to choose four of the set and to beg the Queen's acceptance of them in the name of the artist.

Eight or ten drawings were in the possession of the Duchess of Marlborough; several belonged to Colonel Hamilton (whose violin playing had charmed Gainsborough into giving him a picture), and Mr. Sheridan was the owner of twelve of those beautiful sketches "by the most animating painter who ever described rustic nature, who, to the majesty of Rubens and the air of Claude, united the truth of Wynants and the simplicity of Ruysdael." "Mr. Sheridan," said the writer in conclusion, "prizes these reliques with that fraternal attachment which genius bestows upon all her sons." And Sheridan, though usually in a position more or less impecunious, appears to have preserved these drawings from his creditors for a great many years, for some of them were still hanging in his wife's dressing-room in 1806.

On the 24th of March Mrs. Gainsborough announced that the exhibition and sale of her late husband's pictures would commence on the 30th of the same month at Schomberg House, and would be continued every day except Sundays until further notice. The pictures would be on view from ten in the morning until six at night, half a crown would be charged for admission, and Mr. Gainsborough Dupont would be in attendance to dispose of the exhibits by private contract. It was expressly stated that no pictures would be mentioned in the catalogue except those actually in the possession of Mr. Gainsborough at the time of his death, including the before-mentioned Old Masters, which he had collected "with great attention."

Gainsborough, although a fine painter, was perhaps not a good judge of pictures, for the prices attached to many of the fifty Old Masters that he had purchased from time to time suggest that the authenticity of the canvases was more than questionable. Of three portraits of ladies by Vandyke, the painter whom he admired above all others, one certainly was marked at eighty guineas, but the others were offered at fifteen guineas each. A portrait by Rubens, said to represent the wife of that master, was sold for ten guineas; a man's portrait by Velasquez for fifteen; two portraits of ladies by Sir Peter Lely for twenty guineas each; and a *Fruit Piece* by Michael Angelo for twenty guineas. Another Michael Angelo, *Angel appearing to the Virgin Mary*, failed to find a purchaser at five guineas. Most of the remaining Old Masters in Gainsborough's collection were offered at prices ranging from two to forty guineas, and only one was marked above a hundred. This was the *St. John* of Murillo, the picture brought from Spain some years before by Cumberland and purchased by Gainsborough from his friend the dealer Desenfans. The price asked for the Murillo was three hundred guineas.

On the other hand, if Old Masters were cheap at

Schomberg House, comparatively large sums were asked for copies of their works by Gainsborough. A hundred and fifty guineas was demanded for his copy of the well-known Vandyke, *The Pembroke Family*, painted from memory on a canvas about three feet by four; and a hundred guineas for the copy of the painting by Vandyke of Lord John and Lord Bernard Stuart. The last mentioned of these copies by Gainsborough was shown at the spring exhibition of the Whitechapel Art Gallery in 1908, together with several other works of a similar nature from his hand. Among the remaining copies included in the sale were those of Lord Grantham's Velasquez, *The Conspirators*, and of the portrait by Vandyke at Holkham of the Duc d'Aremberg, for which Gainsborough's unfinished portrait of the Prince of Wales had been designed as a pendant.

Among the forty landscapes on the walls, varying in price from ten to five hundred guineas, were two not marked for sale. These were the pictures painted three or four years earlier for the Prince of Wales. They had remained in the artist's possession, and were hung in the exhibition with the sanction and approval of the Prince. The subject-pictures by Gainsborough included *The Woodman*, the *Boy at a Cottage Fire and Girl Eating Milk*, the *Boy with a Cat*, the *Representation of St. James's Park with Drest Figures*, and the *Beggar Boys*. A prominent and unexpected object in the exhibition was the oval portrait group of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, shown walking in a garden with Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, the Duchess's sister, seated in the background. The portrait was priced at a hundred guineas. The drawings, a hundred and forty-eight in number, were offered at from two to ten guineas each.

A few privileged persons were allowed to see the exhibition a day or two before it was opened to the public, and among these was the Duke of York, who, accompanied by Sheridan, paid a long visit to Schomberg House on

Saturday, March 28th. On the following Monday the pictures were on view, and Bate, anxious to do all in his power to help the widow and daughters of his friend, reprinted in the *Morning Herald* of that day the advertisement of the 24th of March, not in the ordinary fashion, but in italics, and in the middle of the news page. He accompanied this with an announcement to the effect that Mrs. Gainsborough had been solicited to sell certain pictures and drawings, but had refused to part with one until they were all offered to the general view, or to suffer them to be exposed in any rooms but those in which they were painted.

The centre of attraction at the exhibition was *The Woodman*. For some days before the pictures were on view rumours were again in circulation that the King intended to add the picture to his collection, and that nothing but "a well-known calamity," by which was meant His Majesty's mental breakdown in the preceding autumn, had prevented him from acquiring it earlier. However, the King did not purchase *The Woodman*, which was secured by Lord Gainsborough for five hundred guineas on the first day of the sale. Another picture, hanging in the upper room, *A Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door with his Family*, described as the last landscape of any magnitude painted by Gainsborough, was the theme of general admiration. It had been painted as a companion to the autumnal scene for which Sir Peter Burrell had lately given three hundred and fifty guineas—*The Market Cart*, now in the National Gallery. Contemporary opinion ranked it as richer in painting and effect than Sir Peter's picture, and as possessing merit beyond all works of the kind produced by Gainsborough. But this picture of the peasant at his door, "the finest landscape ever produced, with its rich scenery of a summer evening unsurpassed by the fervid glow of Claude," although praised by everybody, found no buyer, perhaps because its price of five hundred guineas was thought too

high. I have been unable to trace the present owner of *A Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door*, but a picture of exactly the same size (75 × 61 inches) of a peasant family outside a cottage was lent by Sir George Beaumont in 1885 to the Gainsborough exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery.

All the comments that appeared on the exhibition show that Gainsborough was regarded by most people at that time, as he chose to regard himself—as a painter of pastoral and landscape subjects who had practised portraiture for the sake of making a living. His achievements in portraiture are rarely mentioned, while his landscapes and his pastoral subjects, such as the *Boy at a Cottage Fire and a Girl Eating Milk*, and the *Boy with a Cat*, are praised in extravagant terms. "The cat alone," says one critic, "is a better warrant for immortality than could be produced by groups of Academicians who amuse the caprices of a vicious taste. Every landscape, too, having animals or groups of rustic figures, discovers the peculiar and superlative genius of the man; it is astonishing that he did not cultivate this and neglect every other pursuit." Nevertheless, the pictures of the boy and girl at the fire, and the boy with the cat, remained unsold, while the landscapes sold fairly well. Several of the larger ones, including the "evening scene of a cottage near some water," and the majority of the smaller ones, were sold in the first three days. The large work referred to was probably No. 78, *Landscape with a Cottage and Figures*, the price of which was a hundred and fifty guineas. Lady Hoare bought, for a hundred guineas, the picture with the figures of two woodmen loading a donkey, and other purchasers of landscapes in the earlier stages of the exhibition were Lord Darnley, Lord Duncannon, Mr. Knight, Mr. George Hardinge, Mrs. Child, Colonel Fitzpatrick, and Sir George Beaumont.

The notes written on the landscapes by Bate and others are of great interest, and would be more so if it were pos-

sible always to identify the works described. The writers doubtless obtained their information from Gainsborough Dupont, who was in the rooms all day, receiving the visitors and endeavouring to sell his uncle's pictures. We learn that the Prince of Wales's landscape, No. 75, a study of an upland and valley, with sheep, water, trees, and broken ground, was painted on Gainsborough's return from his visit to the Lakes in the autumn of 1783, the visit made in the society of his lifelong friend, Samuel Kilderbee of Ipswich.

This picture, which was included in the first exhibition at Schomberg House, in 1784, though not a portrait of any particular spot, is described as highly characteristic of the scenery of the Lake country visited by Gainsborough. Another landscape, No. 52, was painted after a tour in Wales, and one critic declared that not only had the wild scenery been transferred to the canvas with due attention to its grace and charm, but that the picture had "such evident marks of locality that whoever has been west of the Severn will be struck with this mimic scene." One of the purchasers of landscapes at the close of the first week was Lord Gower, afterwards created Duke of Sutherland, who bought No. 72 for a hundred and twenty guineas. The picture, described as a composition of wild and rugged country, is perhaps the mountain landscape with rocks and streams now in the collection of the present Duke of Sutherland, and reproduced in Lord Ronald Gower's book on Gainsborough.

Wales probably inspired Lord Gower's picture, and the *Landscape with Sheep and Figures,* "a beautiful scene of an Alpine solitude," which was hanging at the end of the upper room at Schomberg House, close to the large picture of *A Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door with his Family*. A picture much admired by the critics of the day, although it failed to find a purchaser, was No. 64, *Landscape with Cows and Horses*. This work, praised generally for its fine breadth and airiness, and the colour

of the animals, was moved after the first week to a better position nearer the light.

Throughout April the exhibition at Schomberg House attracted numerous visitors in spite of the half-crown charged for admission, and the pictures continued to sell, though not so readily as the widow and her friends had hoped. In the middle of the month the Duke of Newcastle bought for eighty guineas the *Beggar Boys*, a picture which Gainsborough had painted five years earlier, using as a model the lad who had sat for the figure of *A Shepherd* exhibited in the Academy of 1781. At this period, it is interesting to know, a frequent visitor to the exhibition was a great lady whose name is inseparably connected in the public mind with that of Gainsborough, and with the mystery that surrounds the canvas known as "The Stolen Duchess." "It is not a little flattering," says Bate, "to the memory of Mr. Gainsborough that his pictures and drawings have been repeatedly visited by the Duchess of Devonshire, whose elegance of taste in the Fine Arts is equal to her politeness of manners and accomplishment of person."

But a more important personage than the Duchess of Devonshire was soon to visit the exhibition. On the 18th of April the *Morning Herald*, in a notice headed with the largest capitals, announced that on the previous day the Queen, accompanied by the Princess Royal, Princess Augusta, and Princess Elizabeth—the three "Eldest Princesses" who figured in the portrait group withdrawn from the Academy in 1784—had driven from Buckingham House to Pall Mall unattended by guards, and alighted at Gainsborough's house. The Royal party, whose visit "operated to suspend for a time the resort of gay carriages to the rooms," was received by Lord Ailesbury and a lady-in-waiting who had been sent in advance to prepare for their arrival, and remained for an hour and a half examining the pictures. They were interested most in *The Woodman* and *A Boy at a*

Cottage Fire, both of which had been seen and admired by the King at Buckingham House early in the previous year, and in Gainsborough's drawings, of which the Queen bought six. These were part of the series in coloured chalk, of which her Majesty already owned four that were the gift of the artist himself. The twelve drawings comprised in this series are said by Bate to have been the only works in coloured chalks finished by Gainsborough. The Princess Royal, who admired his drawings and possessed some artistic skill, afterwards made copies of several of those acquired by the Queen. Other distinguished visitors at this time were Prince William Henry (afterwards William the Fourth) and Princess Sophia; and the Duchess of Gloucester, a frequent sitter to Gainsborough and the original of one of his most charming portraits.

The Queen bought two pictures from the exhibition in addition to the drawings mentioned above, but their titles have not been recorded. It is not unlikely that one of them was the oval portrait group of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland and Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, the presence of which in the rooms had been the cause of a great deal of gossip. Three or four days before the Queen's visit a writer in one of the newspapers concluded a favourable criticism of the group by saying: "It is extraordinary why this picture is not purchased by some of the Duchess's family, and still more surprising that it should be offered for sale when it was painted at the Duke's instance." If not purchased by the Queen on the occasion of her visit to the exhibition, the Cumberland group was no doubt bought soon afterwards by some one in the interests of the Court. Had it not been disposed of during the sale the Royal Academy would have purchased it, for at a meeting of the Council, held in May, it was resolved: "That when Mrs. Gainsborough's exhibition is over fifty guineas be offered for Mr. Gainsborough's picture of their Royal Highnesses the Duke

and Duchess of Cumberland." It has been said that the garden shown in this picture was at Kew, but according to a contemporary note it represents some place in the grounds of the Duke's Lodge at Windsor, where the picture was painted. It was lent by Queen Victoria to the Winter Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1895.

At the end of April Mrs. Gainsborough decided to reduce the charge for admission to the exhibition from half a crown to a shilling, professedly "with a view to accommodate the admirers of Mr. Gainsborough's genius in a way as extensive as possible," but more likely because the attendance at the higher price showed signs of falling off. The *Morning Herald* announced the change in another advertisement printed in italics and placed in the midst of the news paragraphs, and more visitors than ever flocked to Pall Mall, whither, on the 28th of April, the French Ambassador escorted a party of distinguished foreigners to see the work of the great English painter. More pictures were sold in the second period of the exhibition, and among them the most highly priced of the Old Masters, the *St. John* of Murillo, which Sir Peter Burrell bought for the amount at which it was offered—three hundred guineas. This was the picture for which Gainsborough had paid Desenfans five hundred guineas two years earlier. I have been able, fortunately, to trace the subsequent history of the Murillo so much admired by Gainsborough, and for which he paid what was then regarded as a very large price. It is now in the collection formed by the late Dr. Ludwig Mond, and in part bequeathed (subject to the life interest of Mrs. Mond) to the National Gallery. By the terms of Dr. Mond's will the Trustees are allowed, with certain limitations, to choose pictures from the collection, and it is probable, therefore, that at some future time Gainsborough's Murillo will hang in Trafalgar Square.

The large sketch of *A Foxhunt* in the exhibition at Schomberg House, on a canvas about eight feet by six,

ST. JOHN IN THE WILDERNESS

(Gainsborough's Murillo)

By permission of Mrs. Ludwig Mond

was bought by Sir John Leicester (afterwards Lord de Tabley) for thirty guineas. It is not unlikely that *A Foxhunt* is the picture of the same title, now in the possession of Lord Rosebery. Several other works were sold for small prices from the Gainsborough collection, but *A Boy at a Cottage Fire and a Girl Eating Milk,* marked at four hundred guineas, and the *Boy with a Cat* at two hundred and fifty remained unsold, although both had been universally admired. Stranger still, there was no buyer for the beautiful picture of the promenaders in the Mall, described in the catalogue as *A Representation of St. James's Park with Drest Figures,* the price of which was only two hundred guineas.

The Gainsborough exhibition remained open until the end of May, and no fewer than seven hundred visitors, " persons of distinction," paid their shillings at Schomberg House on the last day. The close of the exhibition was preceded by an announcement respectfully informing the public that, after the 31st of the month, no access could possibly be permitted to the rooms, and requesting purchasers to take away their pictures within ten days under penalty of forfeiting the deposit money, according to the conditions of the sale. The result of the exhibition could not have been gratifying to Mrs. Gainsborough or to Bate, who, for the sake of his old friend, had done so much to help and advertise it in the columns of the *Morning Herald.* The larger portion of the pictures, old and new, worth at catalogue prices between seven and eight thousand pounds, remained on Mrs. Gainsborough's hands, and not more than a quarter of the drawings had been disposed of. Most of the unsold works were reserved for the sale which Mr. Christie conducted at Gainsborough's house three years later, and the sold ones sent to the various collectors by whom they had been acquired.

Among these last-mentioned works was Gainsborough's favourite picture, *The Woodman,* which, as I

have already mentioned, was bought by the Earl of Gainsborough on the first day of the exhibition. It is the picture referred to in the life of Nollekens by J. T. Smith, who knew Gainsborough and visited at his house. Smith declares that the " excellent picture of *The Woodman* stood for years unsold against the wall, and though the sum asked for it was only one hundred guineas, it remained in Gainsborough's room until after his death, when Lord Gainsborough purchased it for five hundred guineas, the sum the artist's widow thought proper to put upon it." This statement has been accepted by Cunningham and Fulcher and some of the biographers who succeeded them, but it is manifestly incorrect in certain important particulars. Smith was writing of events that occurred forty years before the date of his book, and his memory played him false. *The Woodman* could not have stood for years unsold in Gainsborough's studio, because it was one of the last completed of his important works, and was only commenced in the summer of 1787. Nor is it in the remotest degree probable that it was ever offered for sale for a hundred guineas or anything approaching that sum. *The Woodman,* painted at a time when Gainsborough's works were selling freely and for large sums, was from the first regarded as a notable picture, and was talked about from the time it was sent to Buckingham House for the King's inspection early in January 1788. Desenfans offered four hundred guineas for *The Woodman,* an offer that was refused by the artist, who always attached a high value to this work, and had reason to think the King might buy it. He knew, too, that it was hankered after by Lord Gainsborough, the ultimate possessor of the canvas.

The Woodman was an unlucky picture, as most people know, but one of its misfortunes has escaped the notice of modern writers. It was sent to Lord Gainsborough's house after the close of the exhibition in Pall Mall, and a few months later was despatched by its new owner to

his seat, Exton Park, Oakham. Soon afterwards it was announced that "this glorious picture in removing to Lord Gainsborough's seat has been spoilt. A knot in the packing-case has rubbed a hole in the canvas, and a bottle of strong varnish, sent carelessly in the case, broke, and has damaged the picture still more." However, Bate found out from Gainsborough Dupont, to whom the repairs were entrusted, that the damage was less serious than had been reported. The bottle of varnish which was broken in the packing-case had caused a sheet, placed over the picture for security, to adhere to some portions of the painting. The adhesion was reduced by spirits of turpentine, and all that Dupont had to do was to effect "a timely prevention of corrosive consequences, and to restore a coat of Gainsborough's exquisite transparent varnish—an art in itself—to preserve the colours from change." The secret of Gainsborough's "exquisite transparent varnish" has not been handed down to us, but, according to his friend Jackson, he was too fond of varnish in the concluding portion of his career, and the stability of his work suffered in consequence.

The Earl of Gainsborough died in 1798, leaving no successor to the title; and all his property, including Exton and the pictures contained in the house, descended to his nephew, Mr. Gerard Noel Edwards, who thereupon assumed the family surname of Noel. In May 1810 Mr. Noel had his works of art examined and put in order where necessary by a picture cleaner and restorer named Hill, who completed his work and left Exton Park on the evening of the 22nd. At five o'clock on the morning of the 23rd the eastern end of the ancient house was discovered to be on fire, and before assistance could be obtained the entire wing with its contents had been destroyed. It is said that nothing was saved from any of the burnt rooms except a sum of £2000 in bank-notes which Mr. Noel had in his bedroom. The pictures

destroyed included works by Titian, Rubens, Teniers, Salvator Rosa, and other foreign masters, and several paintings by Gainsborough, in addition to *The Woodman*. Among these were the well-known *Cottage Children with the Ass*, two fine landscapes, and a picture described as *The Fisher Boy*, which I have been unable to identify. Mr. Noel suffered a loss of £20,000, of which only a quarter was covered by insurance.

The story of Gainsborough's supposed inability to find a purchaser for *The Woodman*, even at so small a price as a hundred guineas, is matched by the statement concerning the hundreds of unsold landscapes that are said to have been stacked at the time of his death on either side of the passages at Schomberg House. As a matter of fact, his remaining landscapes, shown in the exhibition, numbered, as already stated, less than forty all told. Two of these were sold works, belonging to the Prince of Wales, and nearly half of the remainder were small studies, some of them only a few inches square. It may have been difficult to dispose of landscapes at Ipswich and Bath, but they appear to have sold fairly well in the last years in Pall Mall. Among the many inaccurate statements about Gainsborough's landscapes, one may be mentioned concerning *The Market Cart*. William Sandby, in his sketch of Gainsborough's life in his *History of the Royal Academy of Arts*, says that Gainsborough received only twenty guineas for this picture, which, as we have seen, was sold almost at once and for a high price to Sir Peter Burrell. Bate, in a paragraph on the death of the fourth Duke of Rutland in 1787, mentions that the pictures upon which he had not long before spent £16,000 included three landscapes by Gainsborough, and the cost of the three is given as £220 in an undated list in the Duke's writing, preserved at Belvoir, and entitled "Pictures and Statues that I have collected." At auction, too, Gainsborough's landscapes seem to have fetched fair prices in his life-time, as in the case of the two small works in the collection of

Sir Joshua's master, Hudson; and the Cornard Wood picture for which Boydell paid seventy-five guineas in the spring of 1788.

The newspapers of 1789 make it clear that Mrs. Gainsborough's object in showing her husband's pictures in the rooms in which they were produced, and in refusing to part with any of them before the exhibition was opened, was to checkmate the forgers who were now more busy than ever. A writer who prophesies that the time is not far distant when a Gainsborough landscape will be sought for as eagerly as one from the brush of Claude or Rubens, says of the pictures then at Schomberg House: "They are shown in the very rooms in which they were painted, and it is a pleasing reflection to a collector that he is able to select a picture with a confidence of its being a genuine work untouched and unimitated; so that no vile copy can in future strike him with surprise, and diminish from the value and scarcity of the work he possesses." The same note is struck by the *Morning Post*, which agrees that "it has been very properly observed on the pictures of Mr. Gainsborough, that they should not be suffered to leave the rooms where his exquisite pencil gave them existence, till they are sold. A collector, thus convinced that no tampering brush has violated the touch of the great master, will select in security."

Bate, who in the *Morning Herald*, two or three months after Gainsborough's death, had warned the public against purchasing drawings which purported to come from his hand, now spoke more plainly about forgers. After the close of the Schomberg House exhibition, he published an article on the subject, couched in the strongest terms. "When," he said, "a genius of first-rate merit departs, with what posthumous rubbish is he instantly encumbered, to answer the catchpenny views of literary fabrications! So fares it in the graphic branch as much as in letters, and such is the fate of the charming Gainsborough, Since his death, scarce a sale of pictures has occurred in which

some wretched imitations of his fine work have not been introduced. An execrable impostor of the brush who resides at Bath has been labouring for some months past to impose on the taste of the public by pictures and drawings in the Master's style ; and two others in different parts of the kingdom are employed in the like ungenerous manner, which, in the end, they will find most unprofitable. Two pictures under the description just mentioned were last week sent to Mr. Greenwood, and we believe they are intended for sale this day. The eye of that gentleman is too correct to be imposed upon, and his integrity is too established to allow the deceptions in question to pass as genuine works. It is well that they fell into hands too respectable to continue the deceit, and we pledge ourselves to be vigilant in exposing such contemptible artifices whenever they are attempted."

Mr. Greenwood was the auctioneer-artist who sold the Cornard Wood landscape to Boydell, and the sale at which the forged Gainsboroughs were announced to make their appearance was one of pictures "the property of a Man of Fashion," held on the 11th of June 1789.

CHAPTER XVIII

GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT

New light on Dupont's career—Articled to his uncle—A student at the Royal Academy—Thicknesse again—A blackmailer—Bate's opinion of him—Dupont as Gainsborough's successor—The King and the Prime Minister befriend him—Dupont exhibits a portrait of Gainsborough at the Academy—Badly hung—Dupont said to have married his cousin—Mrs. Gainsborough leaves Schomberg House—Another sale—Bate the chief buyer—Dupont an unsuccessful candidate for the A.R.A.—His work at Trinity House—His death—Sale of Gainsborough's unfinished works—Extraordinary prices—The *Musidora* and *The Housemaid*—Thirteen shillings for three portraits—Death of Mrs. Gainsborough—Sale of her husband's personal effects—"A blunderbuss, a set of tools"—Hoppner buys his lute—Deaths of Mary and Margaret.

MRS. GAINSBOROUGH lived at the house in Pall Mall for three years after the sale of June 1789, and with her remained her nephew, who cherished hopes of succeeding to his uncle's connection as a portrait painter. Gainsborough Dupont was a man of a retiring disposition, of whose career the existing books of artistic biography tell us practically nothing, except that he was his uncle's assistant for many years, and that he painted a large group of portraits for the Court Room at Trinity House. His name is given as Dupont in all the contemporary records with which I am acquainted, but Seguier, in his *Dictionary of Painters*, says he believes that "Dupon" is its proper form, and it is written as "Du Pont" by Gainsborough's niece, Mrs. Lane, in a letter to Allan Cunningham. It suggests, of course, a French origin, and in the newspaper criticisms of his work at the Royal Academy the artist is more than once mentioned as "Monsieur Dupont," but at Sudbury, where he was born,

the name has been familiar for many generations. At the chapel in Friars Street, which has succeeded the meeting-house in which Gainsborough was baptized, a font may be seen that was erected twenty years ago by the children of Alfred and Mary Dupont, who had worshipped in the chapel for more than half a century. The name of Dupont is still displayed over a shop in Gainsborough Street, not far from the great painter's birthplace.

Dupont, who was the son of Gainsborough's sister Sarah, owed his artistic education almost entirely to his uncle, to whom, as his indentures show, he was apprenticed, on the 12th of January 1772, to learn "The Art or Mystery of a Painter." When looking through the minutes of the Council of the Royal Academy, I discovered a curious fact about Gainsborough Dupont's training in art. He was a student in the schools of the Royal Academy, and was admitted in 1775, on the same day as John Hoppner. It is strange that Gainsborough, who in 1775 was on the worst of terms with the Academy, should have allowed his nephew and apprentice to work in the schools at Somerset House. Dupont, when apprenticed, was a boy of seventeen, but he appears to have lived in Gainsborough's house from an early period. Bate, who always showed a friendly interest in Dupont, says that he was with Gainsborough from his infancy; and Thicknesse, who knew the young painter in his Bath days, speaks of him as having been "fostered under his uncle's wing from a child." Both men encouraged Dupont to remain at Schomberg House, and to endeavour to take his uncle's place in the world of art. Bate supported this idea consistently in the *Morning Herald;* and Thicknesse said that he would venture to pronounce Dupont "a man of exquisite genius, little inferior in the line of a painter to his uncle. I hope and believe that, if his own diffidence and modesty does not prevent him, he will not remove from his late uncle's house, for I am sure he can support its former credit, either as a landscape or a portrait painter."

This was written in Thicknesse's sketch of the life of Gainsborough, published not long after the painter's death, but the portion of the page on which it is printed is missing in some copies. It was torn off by Thicknesse himself, who quarrelled with Dupont before all the edition was disposed of. The cause of the quarrel was a letter written by Thicknesse to Mrs. Gainsborough, in which he threatened to attack not only her reputation, but that of her late husband—the man whose fine qualities he had just been praising in print! The letter, said to have been "couched in such execrable terms as would be deemed unpardonable from a drayman, to the most abandoned of women," was properly resented by Dupont, who warned Thicknesse that as his uncle—the natural guardian of the family—was no more, he himself would be his aunt's champion.

Philip Thicknesse, however reputable a person he may have been in earlier life, had descended to a very low level at the time Dupont defended Mrs. Gainsborough from his attacks. He appears to have become a systematic blackmailer, and practically admits as much in his *Memoirs and Anecdotes*. "My friends," he says, "eat my beef, drink my port, and help to spend that which my enemies supply me with. It is for this reason that I treat them, poor devils, with tenderness. I should be sorry to do them *quite up*, for I know not what I should have done to make both ends meet in my old age if it had not been for the repeated kindness of my enemies . . . I can at any time muster ten or a dozen knaves or fools who will put a hundred pounds or two into my pocket merely for holding them up to public scorn." A contemporary reviewer of the *Memoirs and Anecdotes* pointed out that this was no new mode of picking up a livelihood, as editors of daily papers had been publicly charged not only with receiving payment for holding people up to ridicule, but with taking hush-money, and he hinted that hush-money was not altogether unconnected with the methods of Mr. Thicknesse.

There were many who feared him and his possible revelations, but these, fortunately, did not include the editor of the *Morning Herald*. Bate feared no one, and, in spite of the harshness of the law of libel of that time, did not hesitate in his journal to warn the public against a man whom he regarded as a scoundrel. "There are persons," said he, "who should be indicated as pests of society. Wherever they go, they announce their power of doing mischief, and lay under contribution female timidity and vicious cowardice. A hoary offender of this description has long escaped the cudgel of resentment and the sword of exasperated rage. He has menaced public men into liberal contributions, and has held numerous families in apprehension and terror. It will not be necessary to put P. T. under this infamous but faithful picture."

Thicknesse's last words on the quarrel with Dupont are contained in a malicious letter to Gainsborough's sister, Mrs. Gibbon. He complains bitterly of the action of her nephew, of whom, he said, he had hitherto thought highly. "But," adds Thicknesse, "Mrs. Gainsborough always told me that Dupont was a drunken, worthless fellow, and that I did not know him. . . . I have indeed learnt since I came to town of a very mean, shabby trick which Mr. Gainsborough himself did by me; but his genius and good qualities overlook that. Dupont's ingratitude and Mrs. G's. meanness I shall not overlook." Nothing, however, seems to have come of this threat. Thicknesse went abroad soon afterwards, and died in 1792 while travelling in France.

In the winter following his uncle's death, Dupont was at work upon a portrait of Pitt which Gainsborough had begun. Bate says that Pitt "was never at leisure to sit, and Gainsborough did not live to complete it; but, as far as his pencil went, it was a charming picture, and the finishing of it by Mr. Gainsborough Dupont is in a uniform spirit and style with the touches of his admired relative."

This appears to support the well-known tradition that Dupont finished other portraits left incomplete by Gainsborough, but it is unlikely that much was done by him in this way. According to a writer who visited Gainsborough's studio just before illness compelled him to lay down the brush for ever, there were at that time few portraits in hand, and Dupont had too many commissions of his own to be able to spare time for the completion of those left by his uncle, even if the patrons concerned would have approved of such a course, which is by no means certain. The completion of Pitt's portrait was probably undertaken to gratify some wish of the Prime Minister, who liked Dupont and soon afterwards gave him sittings for another portrait, painted for the Bishop of Lincoln. As will be seen later, Gainsborough's unfinished portraits, including experimental sketches and abandoned beginnings, were sold in 1797 for anything they would fetch, and, although the accumulation of years, they numbered fewer than thirty.

The Duchess of Devonshire promised to sit to Dupont for a three-quarter-length portrait, and commissions were so plentiful that he announced his intention of devoting himself entirely to painting after he had finished the mezzotints of his uncle's *Shepherd Boys with Fighting Dogs* and *Cottage Children with an Ass*. Of this determination his friend in the *Morning Herald* writes : " The engraving by this gentleman of the King from the picture of Mr. Gainsborough, his late uncle, would make us regret that he declines the appendant branch ; were it not that his fine half-length of Mr. Pitt, his head of Mr. Adair, and the exquisite portrait of Mr. Palmer convince us that he cannot fail with his genius of acquiring a *decided superiority* over the painters of the present hour, and contributing highly to the advancement of the art."

But, accustomed for years to the support of the stronger personality of his uncle, Dupont, in spite of this encouragement, was still mistrustful of his powers, and it was with

difficulty that he was prevailed upon to exhibit at the Royal Academy, where his work was seen for the first time in 1790. His contributions in that year were *A Cottage Girl*, in the manner of his uncle, and portraits of Pitt, Mr. Grenville, Lord Bayham, Mr. Palmer (the Controller-General of the Post Office, and an old Bath acquaintance), and Gainsborough. It was in connection with the hanging of the last-named portrait—in the ante-room, and close to the ground—that Bate made the attack on the Forty mentioned in an earlier chapter. He was not the only critic who noticed the position assigned to the portrait of Gainsborough. The *General Magazine*, after praising the portrait, says: "But why in the ante-room, and in one of the worst situations there? Ye Royal Academicians, do your jealousies extend beyond the grave?" Another writer, speaking of Dupont's work generally, remarks that he follows his master's manner with such closeness "that were we not aware, to our extreme regret, that Gainsborough is in his grave, we could have been rather peremptory in asserting that the portraits of Mr. Pitt, Mr Grenville, Lord Bayham, and Mr. Palmer were Gainsborough's painting."

Soon after the close of the Academy Exhibition of 1790, Dupont advertised the publication of his mezzotints of Gainsborough's portraits of the King and Queen, which had been engraved some time before. He states that they are in a style which does not permit of many impressions being taken, and that the charge is two guineas for proofs and one guinea for ordinary prints. Specimens could be seen and subscriptions received "at the late Mr. Gainsborough's house in Pall Mall." Dupont's position in the household at Pall Mall was sometimes misconstrued at this period, as he is occasionally described as "the artist who married the daughter of Mr. Gainsborough." Dupont, as a matter of fact, remained a bachelor to the end of his life.

More pictures were sent to the Academy of 1792,

when Bate praised Dupont effusively; and another critic who saw nothing in his work but an imitation of his uncle's weaknesses, said: "We see Gainsborough's clumsy, unfinished manner, but we look in vain for his chiaroscura and the clearness and beauty of his colouring." The works shown in 1792 were the last painted by Dupont in his uncle's studio, as Mrs. Gainsborough's tenancy of Schomberg House came to an end in that year. Before leaving it she endeavoured to dispose of the landscapes by her husband which had not found purchasers at the first sale in 1789; and on the 1st of June, 1792, Mr. Christie announced that on the following day at twelve o'clock he would sell at Schomberg House the pictures of "that ingenious and esteemed artist, Mr. Gainsborough, deceased, comprising many of his best works, also some capital pictures by Old Masters selected by himself, together with a few fine drawings, and which were exhibited at his house in Pall Mall." Bate, as on other occasions, assisted the widow as much as he could in the *Morning Herald*. He wrote in the paper of June 2nd:

"The brilliant collection of Gainsborough's principal landscapes, which has drawn all the admirers of the art to the view at Pall Mall, are this day to be disposed of by order of his executors, under the hammer of Christie. We shall hereafter name those of the cognoscenti who are fortunate enough from this event to adorn their cabinets with one or more of these inimitable scenes of nature."

Of this sale, unfortunately, the records are very slight. Messrs. Christie, who have been kind enough to allow me to examine many of their catalogues, do not possess a copy of that of the Gainsborough sale of 1792, and I have been unable to discover one elsewhere. Fulcher, however, appears to have seen a marked catalogue (it was perhaps in the possession of the relatives of Dupont at Sudbury, who inherited his property), as he gives some figures which can, I think, relate only to this

sale. At the end of Fulcher's book there is a list of all the pictures by Gainsborough exhibited on the occasion of the first sale in 1789, and to about ten of them prices are attached, which, from the figures, as they are odd sums, appear to refer to a sale by auction. But the pictures of 1789 were not sold by auction but by private treaty, and Fulcher has evidently added to the catalogue of this sale the prices of pictures then unsold but afterwards disposed of by auction in 1792. That this is so is clear from the note which Bate printed, as he promised, after the 1792 sale. Apparently he was disappointed with the result, as, instead of the "list of cognoscenti," he mentions only that the *Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door* was knocked down at 380 guineas. This is the price (£399) attached to the picture in Fulcher's list. But Bate, who never obtrudes his own name or personality in connection with Gainsborough, does not say that he himself was the buyer of the *Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door*, as well as of the large *Landscape with Buildings* for £304, and another landscape for £67, 4s. He seems, indeed, to have been the principal purchaser at the sale of 1792. The well-known picture of *The Mall*, described as *A Representation of St. James's Park with Drest Figures*, was one of the works sold on this occasion, according to Fulcher, for £115, 10s. It had been offered in vain for two hundred guineas at the sale of 1789.

Soon after the sale of 1792 Mrs. Gainsborough and her daughters left Schomberg House for Sloane Street, and Gainsborough Dupont set up house for himself at 17 Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, where he lived for the remainder of his life. Gainsborough's house in Pall Mall was taken by a miniature painter, Robert Bowyer, who called it the Historic Gallery, and arranged in some of its rooms an exhibition of pictures illustrating Hume's *History of England*.

In the following year Dupont was an unsuccessful candidate for an Associateship of the Royal Academy.

There were two vacancies, but they were filled by Hoppner and Beechey. At this time Dupont was painting the portraits of a number of actors and actresses for Mr. Thomas Harris, the lessee and manager of Covent Garden Theatre. One of these portraits, *Mr. Quick in the Character of Spado*, was sent by the artist to the Academy of 1794, where, however, his principal work was a full-length of the King, from whom he appears to have had many commissions. A collection of manuscripts, sold at Christie's a few years ago, included an invoice of Dupont's for "portraits painted for the King," amounting to £493, 10s.; and a letter to his sister, Mrs. Stow, in which he says, "I have just received an order from the King to get two large portraits of himself and the Queen finished and put up in Windsor Palace by the 12th of next month."

The letter is dated the 24th of July 1795, in which year Dupont was engaged upon other portraits of the King and Queen, painted to decorate the walls of the newly erected Trinity House on Tower Hill, where they still hang, together with three other works by the same hand, full-lengths of Pitt and Lord Howe, and a large "Portrait Group of Merchant Elder Brethren." The group, which was the gift to Trinity House of the Merchant Elder Brethren, is the best known work of Gainsborough Dupont. It is about twenty feet in length and ten in height, and hangs on the concave wall of the Grand Staircase on a level with the large landing known at Trinity House as "the quarter-deck." The picture was originally hung in the Court-room, but was removed many years ago to its present situation, in which, unfortunately, it is impossible to judge of the merits of its execution. In the original picture twenty-two of the Merchant Elder Brethren were represented, but as Captain Huddart, F.R.S., was elected soon after the group was painted, his portrait was added on an extra piece of canvas. Captain Huddart's portrait has been added

in similar fashion to the key-plan, neatly and carefully drawn in pencil by Dupont.

On the right hand of the group hangs the portrait of Pitt, looking like a feeble Gainsborough, and in likeness curiously resembling his portrait of the statesman. The Pitt, and the portrait of Howe that is the pendant to it, were in fact for a long time regarded as the work of Gainsborough, but in recent years inquiries made into the matter by Mr. H. S. Liesching, of Trinity House, virtually proved that they were painted by Dupont. Lately the matter has been placed beyond dispute by the discovery of entries in the books of 1794 and 1796. The last entry is as follows : " Paid to Mr. Dupont for painting portraits of their Majesties, Mr. Pitt and Lord Howe for the new Court Room, £420." The paintings of George the Third and his Queen hang in the Library, one of the stately rooms at Trinity House, which contain an interesting and valuable collection of portraits that includes examples of Vandyke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Zoffany, and such modern masters as Watts, Holl, and Herkomer. It is curious that Dupont's portraits of the King and Queen, like those of Pitt and Howe, were for many years wrongly ascribed. The labels formerly affixed to the full-lengths of their Majesties described them as the work of " Ramsay and pupils." Dupont probably owed these commissions to the influence of his patron, Pitt, who was Master of Trinity House at the time they were executed.

Pitt was not the only great personage who bestowed his patronage upon Dupont at this time. Early in 1796 he was commissioned to paint a portrait of the Princess of Wales, and had arranged, as he thought, that it was to be exhibited at the Royal Academy. He informed the Council that he should send it to the Exhibition, and begged that a suitable place might be reserved for the portrait of so important a sitter. But Dupont appears to have been no more fortunate than his uncle

GAINSBOROUGH DUPONT

By permission of Lord D'Abernon of Esher

in dealing with the Forty, and when the Princess's portrait arrived at Somerset House no place was available. The picture, therefore, was withdrawn. In July 1796 Dupont was at Windsor painting some of George the Third's numerous daughters, and these portraits were among his last works, as he died at his house in Grafton Street on the 20th of the following January, after an illness of eight days. Bate, in a sympathetic paragraph about the painter's death, mentioned the patronage given to Dupont by the King and the Prime Minister, and observed: "His amiable and modest manners suffered no variation from this success. To his other qualities he united strict rectitude and a clear sense of honour. Dupont felt an unabating gratitude to his patrons and to his friends—in whom he was select—he was rigidly sincere."

Gainsborough Dupont, who was forty-two when he died, not thirty, as some biographers have represented, was buried with his uncle at Kew. He died intestate, and his estate, sworn under £2000 in value, was administered by his brother Richard, who endeavoured to dispose of his furniture and pictures by private contract three weeks after the funeral. The pictures then offered for sale included some landscapes by Gainsborough, one of which was priced at a hundred and fifty guineas, and another, "an artist's picture, consisting of some grand groups of trees," at a hundred guineas. The attempt to sell by private contract appears to have been a failure, as the property, or most of it, was put up to auction at Christie's rooms in the following April.

This sale at Christie's, although a fiasco as far as prices were concerned, was an affair of great interest, as most of the pictures included in it were the unfinished portraits by Gainsborough, concerning which nothing, so far as I am aware, has been written. These unfinished portraits, however, did not form part of the estate of Dupont, but were the property of his aunt, Mrs.

Gainsborough. The auction was in fact, though not in name, a Gainsborough sale, and Dupont's death was made the excuse for another attempt to dispose of the remaining works left by his uncle. Bate once again did his best for the widow by publishing, on the morning of the sale, a long list of the portraits that were to come under the hammer, and the following preliminary note: "The remaining works of our highly distinguished countryman, Mr. Gainsborough, are to be brought forward for sale this day at Mr. Christie's rooms. Among these are some pictures of special merit, and what is particularly deserving the regard of the amateur, a few dead-coloured landscapes sketched out a short time previously to his death and enriched with his best ideas. Several portraits are in the collection, and as these principally appertain to names and conditions of high note, it will be rather extraordinary if neither personal regard, family affection, nor friendship should not be so far awakened as to restore them to their original alliances."

This appeal fell on deaf ears, for no one seemed anxious to possess the portraits, whether finished or unfinished, and they were knocked down at incredible prices, even lower than those realised a year earlier when the unfinished Reynolds portraits were sold at Greenwood's auction rooms. "This kind of family canvas," said one who was present at Greenwood's, "sold for little more than half-a-crown a foot, but Sir Joshua's sketches and fancy pieces had a better fate."

Less fortunate than Sir Joshua, Gainsborough's few "fancy" pieces fared almost as badly as his portraits, and nothing in this sale fetched tolerable prices except one or two landscapes. The portraits were those of the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester, the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, the Duke of Bedford, Lord Abingdon, Lady Hanham, Mrs. Howard, Mr. Wade of Brighton, Mrs. Oswald, the Marquis Champain, Lady Eardley and child, Lord Jersey, Lady Clive, Lady Aylesford and child, Signor

Savoi, Lady Maynard, Mrs. Ibbetson, Lord Powis, Lord Stopford, Lady Berkeley, Lady Clarges, Lady Littleton, Lady Clifford, Mrs. Methuen, Abel the musician, and Quin the actor. Of Sir Christopher Whichcote, who died some ten or eleven years before the sale, there were two portraits, a half-length and a head. A record of the sums paid for these portraits by Gainsborough should fill with envy the breasts of the collectors of to-day, who know that the slightest work by the master is worth its weight in gold. Most of them, no doubt, were imperfect, but a Gainsborough portrait, even if unfinished, is always interesting, and frequently charming, and a kit-cat of the Duchess of Gloucester, the mother of the beautiful Ladies Waldegrave, must, in any case, have been cheap at £2, 10*s*. A better price was obtained for a full-length of the Duke of Gloucester, which realised £6, but for the Duke of Bedford and Lord Jersey, sold together, the highest bid was only £2, 9*s*. Another pair of portraits, Lady Clive and Lord Powis, went for two guineas; the full-lengths of Lady Aylesford and child and of Lord Abingdon, for two, and two and a half guineas respectively; and the kit-cat of Lady Maynard for £2, 5*s*. The highest price paid for a portrait was for that of Lord Stopford, which, though only a head, was, for some unexplained reason, run up to £7, 17*s*. 6*d*.; but, on the other hand, a head of Lady Clarges was knocked down for five shillings, and thirteen shillings was the final offer for three portraits sold in one lot, of Lady Clifford, Mrs. Howard, and Signor Savoi. The purchaser of the three Gainsboroughs for thirteen shillings was Caleb Whitefoord, the wine merchant, and self-styled connoisseur of art, whose appearance and manner are supposed to have inspired Wilkie's *Letter of Introduction*. The portrait of Signor Savoi, who was a well-known Italian singer of Gainsborough's day, remained in the possession of its purchaser until his death many years afterwards. It was then included in Whitefoord's sale, where it fetched only a guinea and a half, although sold as a Gainsborough,

and with two or three other portraits by unnamed artists thrown in.

According to Mr. Lionel Cust, several pictures now in the Royal collections at Windsor or Buckingham Palace were purchased by the Prince of Wales from Mrs. Gainsborough after her husband's death. Of these, the portraits of the Duke of Cumberland and Quin the actor, and the large oil sketch of *Diana and Actæon* were probably bought at this sale. The price paid for Quin was six guineas, for the Duke of Cumberland (including a portrait of the Duchess), £4, 6*s*., and for the *Diana and Actæon*, which was afterwards hung at Carlton House, £2, 3*s*.

Of the subject and "fancy" pictures by Gainsborough two or three call for remark. *A Nymph at the Bath* (large oval) must have been, I think, the hitherto unidentified National Gallery picture known as *Musidora*. It fetched three guineas at the sale of 1797; where a sketch by Gainsborough, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, was sold for only twenty-two shillings, and the whole-length, *The Housemaid*, unfinished, for four guineas and a half. There can be very little doubt that this unfinished whole-length is the picture recently presented to the National Gallery by Lady Carlisle, and said to be a study of the Hon. Mrs. Graham, the original of the masterpiece at Edinburgh. *The Housemaid* was acquired by a purchaser named Bryan, perhaps the original compiler of the well-known *Dictionary of Artists and Engravers*, who dealt largely in pictures. Another painting knocked down at this sale for three guineas, *Girl Gathering Mushrooms*, is probably *The Mushroom Gatherer* lent to the Royal Academy in 1887 by Mr. W. C. Alexander.

A View in St. James's Park, with figures, may have been a small study for the well-known picture exhibited as *The Park* at Gainsborough's house in 1784, and in 1789 and 1792 as *A Representation of St. James's Park with Drest Figures*, and now known as *The Mall*. That the picture offered for sale in 1797 was identical with the one

shown in earlier years, is most unlikely. According to Fulcher's list of works disposed of at the auction of 1792, *The Mall*, as we call it, was sold to a Mr. Skirrow for £115, 10s. The picture sold in 1797 as *A View in St. James's Park*, was put up as the property of Mrs. Gainsborough, and fetched only thirty guineas. The history of *The Mall* is altogether somewhat obscure. It is supposed to have passed, some time after the sale of 1792, into the possession of Mr. Samuel Kilderbee of Ipswich, and was certainly sold with his collection at Christie's in 1829. But it is equally certain that Frost, the Ipswich drawing-master, owned a large version of *The Mall*, and that it was in his house in 1820.

Of the Gainsboroughs sold in 1797 only the unfinished *Haymaker and Sleeping Girl* was catalogued as Dupont's. It had been given to him by his uncle in the last year of his life. One day Dupont's work pleased Gainsborough so much that as a reward he offered his nephew any picture in the studio. The *Woodman* was on the wall, but Dupont selected the *Haymaker*, to the surprise and disappointment of Gainsborough, who tried in vain to make him alter his choice. At the sale the highest bid for the *Haymaker* was £29, 8*s*. It was therefore kept by the Dupont family, in whose possession it remained until 1872. The plate of Dupont's mezzotint of Mrs. Sheridan was included in the 1797 sale, as well as two portraits of the same lady. All three, however, appear to have been withdrawn, probably at Sheridan's request, as each entry in the catalogue is marked "Delivered to Miss Gainsborough." The copper plate of Dupont's mezzotint of Gainsborough's 1784 portrait, *The Three Eldest Princesses*, together with ninety-two prints, fetched £8, 18*s*. 6*d*. With the pictures and engravings by Dupont were sold the furniture and equipment of his studio. Most of this, no doubt, came originally from Schomberg House, as Gainsborough in his will desired that his nephew should have such things as he required

connected with " the painting business." But the seven easels, some of which must have been used by Gainsborough, colour stands, mirrors, canvases, paints, and fifty-three dozen brushes brought, altogether, less than five pounds.

Mrs. Gainsborough, although she made constant endeavours to dispose of her husband's pictures, retained until her death his sketch-books and collections of engravings, his library—such as it was—and many other things of personal interest. She died at her house in Sloane Street in December, 1798, and was buried at Kew. " Her amiable qualities," says the chronicler of the event, " will long be remembered by those who had the happiness of knowing her, and the most sincere regret is felt for the loss of so estimable a character." Among the property left by her to her eldest daughter Margaret were " the three small landscapes in oil colours and all the drawings in gilt frames, the picture of the *Old Cart Horse* in oil colours, the fine bronze in the back drawing-room, all the family pictures, the three very small landscapes in oil colours in my bedroom, the two varnished drawings in oval gilt frames, and the Diploma signed by King George the Third." The *Old Cart Horse* is perhaps the study in the National Gallery (No. 1484), which was presented in 1896 by the Misses Lane, together with other pictures formerly in possession of the Gainsboroughs. The diploma was, of course, that of the Royal Academy, an institution that the widow apparently scorned to mention.

She directed in her will that all the remaining pictures in her possession should be sold, and the proceeds invested; and on the 8th of May 1799 it was announced that " the private studies and sketches of the celebrated artist, Gainsborough, which have been till now reserved by the family," could be seen at Christie's, and were to be sold in a few days. Mrs. Gainsborough's daughter Margaret, who was the executrix, does not appear to have allowed sentiment to stand in the way when disposing of her father's

belongings, for she sold not only his sketches and engravings, but his books and musical instruments. Two or three pictures were also included in the sale ; and of these two half-lengths of ladies by Gainsborough found a buyer at a guinea the pair, and a *Portrait of a Lady and Child*, ascribed to Lely, fetched thirty shillings. The sketch-books, ten in number, contained between five and six hundred drawings, and they realised altogether about a hundred and fifty pounds. In one of the books were " fifty-eight Italian scenes of architecture and landscape." This is curious, as Gainsborough, though he is said to have travelled on the Continent, certainly never saw Italy. Mrs. Gainsborough, though she had given Dupont many of her husband's studio properties, had, for some reason, preserved his two lay-figures. The better of these figures, upon which doubtless the painter disposed the draperies of some of his finest portraits, was described as " most ingeniously constructed with brass-work joints." It was sold for three pounds.

The lay-figures, purchased probably by some artist of the time, have been lost sight of altogether, with the rest of Gainsborough's professional appliances. Seventy years ago, William Collins, R.A., owned a painting-table that had belonged to Gainsborough, but none of his palettes appear to exist, or any other relic of his studio, unless the penknife in the possession of the Royal Academy can be so described. This penknife, with a handle of ivory or bone, was given by Mrs. Gainsborough to her niece, Mrs. Lane, the mother of Richard Lane, A.R.A. By Lane it was given to Charles Robert Leslie, R.A., whose son, Mr. G. D. Leslie, R.A., presented it some years ago to the Royal Academy.

Gainsborough's large collection of prints included about sixty engravings from the pictures of his rival, Sir Joshua Reynolds, thirty-five after Vandyke, and thirty-two after Claude. A book of fifty-four drawings of shipping in Indian ink by Vandevelde, " exceedingly fine," a

blunderbuss, a set of tools, "a curious tin book to serve as a portfolio for drawings"; a Spanish guitar, and a lute, were among the miscellaneous articles belonging to Gainsborough that figured in the sale. It is interesting to learn that the lute became the property of a distinguished painter, who had long been one of Gainsborough's sincerest admirers. Written against the entry of the instrument in Christie's catalogue is a note of instruction to the auctioneer, "Buy this for Mr. Hoppner," and to John Hoppner the lute fell at the price of £2, 10s. William Jackson, of Exeter, in his essay on Gainsborough, says that the painter "detested reading," and the books sold in 1799 were certainly not those of a reading man. Several were upon architecture, a subject in which Gainsborough appears to have been interested; and the others included the book on perspective by his Ipswich friend, Kirby, and another on the same subject by Malton; Angelo's *School of Fencing*, Stubbs' *Anatomy of the Horse*, two volumes of Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, Campbell's *Vitruvius*, Chambers' *Civil Architecture*, Gibbs' *Architecture*, Wood's *Ruins of Baalbec*, Spence's *Polymetis*, and Birch's *Lives of Illustrious Persons in Great Britain*. This last item is interesting, for the fact that Gainsborough had such a costly book in his possession gives colour to the story that he worked upon its illustrations in his boyhood soon after his first arrival in London.

Gainsborough's two daughters both lived to be old women, but very little is known of their proceedings after the death of their mother. One of them must have painted, as in early catalogues of picture-sales landscapes by "Miss Gainsborough" are occasionally mentioned, The sisters were living at Brook Green, Hammersmith. in 1803, but afterwards moved two or three miles farther out, to Acton, then a quiet and comparatively remote little village. An Ipswich friend mentions them as still residing in Acton in 1818, when Margaret is described as odd in her behaviour, and her sister quite deranged.

At Acton, according to Mr. Henry Mitchell, the sisters lived in a detached house on the hill, upon the site of which the police station now stands Here Margaret made the acquaintance of a young artist named Briggs, who lived in the same neighbourhood, and into the hands of Briggs passed certain pictures by Gainsborough which had descended to his daughter. It has frequently been asserted that Margaret Gainsborough bequeathed these pictures to Briggs, but this was not the case. Except to relatives, she made only one bequest, and that was to a servant. The bulk of her property, which was valued for probate at £8000, she left to three female cousins, one of whom, the Mrs. Sophia Lane, already mentioned, acted as her executrix.

Margaret Gainsborough died on December 18, 1820, and her younger sister, Mary Fischer, in July, 1826. For Mary Fischer death was a happy release. In 1824, two years before the end, this once beautiful woman was described as having long survived her mental faculties, and as "now doomed to all human speculation to waste the remainder of her life in the vain pomp and self-complacency of fancied Royalty."

I have been unable to discover where Gainsborough's daughters are buried, but it is not at Acton. Although their names are not inscribed on the stone with those of Gainsborough, his wife and nephew, it is still possible that the sisters are interred in the family grave at Kew, from which Acton is but a short distance. Unfortunately, nothing can be learned from the local records concerning the burial of any of the Gainsboroughs at Kew, as some of the registers of the church were stolen about seventy years ago, and have never been recovered.

CHAPTER XIX

NOTES AND ANECDOTES

Gainsborough at Lulworth—Origin of *The Market Cart*—Anecdotes of his landscapes—"The Man in Pall Mall"—An amateur touches up his picture—His poor opinion of English landscape subjects—As a musician—Jackson's unfairness to him—Contemporary evidence of his skill—The influence of Giardini—Romney and Giardini—Bate on Gainsborough's music—"He played always to the feelings"—Colonel Hamilton fiddles for a picture—The Colonel identified—The picture described—Influence of Abel's music on Gainsborough—He dances on a pewter quart pot—Gainsborough intoxicated—Singular story—A brilliant conversationalist—He meets Dr. Johnson—Catches his trick of nodding the head—Gainsborough's ambition to paint Shakespearean subjects—Painting by candle light—Model landscapes—The little table under the dresser—The Eidophusikon—"Our Thunder is the best."

A FEW months after Gainsborough's death, it was announced in several journals that a volume of anecdotes concerning the artist was in the press, and that in this volume particular praise would be given to Lord Gainsborough, Lord Porchester, Sir Francis Basset, Sir Peter Burrell, and Mr. Tollemache, "for that spirit and taste by which his admirable pictures of rustic history were encouraged." The announcement was no mere rumour, for Bate wrote encouragingly of the proposed book, which, however, does not appear to have been produced. There are no further references to it in contemporary newspapers, and apparently the idea was abandoned of publishing these anecdotes, which might have been of the greatest interest and value. But many stories were told by Bate and others about Gainsborough both before and after his death, and some of these—unmentioned hitherto in any biography of the painter—are included in this chapter.

Little or nothing has been known of Gainsborough's journeys about the country in search of recreation and of material for his landscapes, but an interesting glimpse of him as a traveller is given by Bate in an article written soon after the painter's death :

" This great genius, schooled in Nature's extensive seminary, and not in *Academies*, about six years before his death made a tour through the West of England, to observe the diversity of landscape, the varied combinations of objects, and the tinges of hue in a country so rich and romantic. In one of his extraordinary excursions Lulworth Castle caught his eye. The rich effect of the building, the trees and other scenery, so enchanted this enthusiast of the palette, this poet in colour, that he alighted from his horse and desired his nephew and fellow-traveller, Mr. Gainsborough Dupont, to do the same.

" Their saddle-bags generally contained their fare, and they took their repast under some ancient trees, contemplating the distant beauties which every vista opened to the eye. Here they were accosted by a venerable looking personage, who prevailed upon them to repair to the Castle. They complied, and he led them to the battlements, where the enraptured eye of Gainsborough feasted on an expanse of prospect, everywhere embellished with the rich tintings of the retiring sun. His mind in this luxuriant gratification became stored with some of those beautiful ideas which he afterwards diffused through the fine landscape in Sir Peter Burrell's possession—and the still more enchanting landscape in Mrs. Gainsborough's rooms (the companion to Sir Peter's picture) also retains a fervour from this visit."

The venerable stranger who invited them into the Castle proved to be the steward of Mr. Weld, the owner of Lulworth, and Gainsborough always spoke with pleasure of his kindness. " If," said Bate at the end of his article, " this anecdote has not before reached the knowledge of the liberal possessor of Lulworth, it is now recorded in order that the testimony of so accurate a judge of nature may be adverted to in proof of the beauties of this ancient seat." The pictures inspired by Gains-

borough's visit to Lulworth, a neighbourhood whose charm attracts strongly the painters of our own time, were *The Market Cart*, now in the National Gallery, and *A Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door*, which the editor of the *Morning Herald* himself purchased two or three years after he told the story.

As we see by the visit to Lulworth, Gainsborough sought inspiration from nature for his landscapes whenever it was possible, although in his later years he no longer copied the trees and grasses with the painstaking fidelity of the work of the Suffolk period. A writer in the *Repository of Arts* in 1813 says that before Gainsborough's day artists and amateurs alike were content to make their landscape compositions from Italian, Dutch, and Flemish prints; and that not only were their pictures unlike English scenery in character, but those versed in art could readily point out whence a tree, a rock, or a building had been stolen. A foreground of Wynants, a background of Claude, and cows and sheep from Berghem and Paul Potter were all introduced into the same picture.

"Thus it is," says the writer of 1813, "that the works of the English landscape painters, until within a few years, are worthy of the places to which they are usually consigned; to ascend from the drawing-rooms of the mansions where they once were placed, to the apartments of the servants, until by an almost certain fate they become fixtures, without frames, upon the damp walls of a broker's shop. . . . Gainsborough's sketches improved the general taste for English landscape composition; he taught the artists and amateurs how to select, and those who, before the appearance of his rude oaks and deep-rutted lanes, his rustic figures and moss-grown cottages and barns, were content to amuse themselves by making landscape compositions from prints, now left their painting-rooms to explore the scenery of their own country and to work from nature."

Many years earlier, while Gainsborough was working in the fulness of his powers, the infinite superiority of his

landscapes to the conventional efforts of the older school, was already recognised by the more intelligent critics. Some time before Gainsborough's death an article called *Hints to Professors of Landscape Painting*, in which perhaps the hand of John Hoppner may be traced, appeared in the *Morning Post*. Writing in a strain of contemptuous irony, the author tells the artists of the still popular artificial school that their best plan is to take the blackest Old Master landscape they can find and copy it. If they are lucky there is a good chance that in a year or two it may be taken for a pearl, and the plan had the further advantage that they could do their work at their own firesides and save the risk of catching cold in the dews of the fields. He concludes:

"If you paint for the connoisseurs, never attempt at simple elegance, picturesque ideas of nature, brilliancy of colouring, or taste in the grouping of your figures. Leave all this nonsense to the man in Pall Mall, who is so cursedly obstinate that instead of seeking for a manner in the *Old School* and giving you *Athenian Temples* and *Roman Ruins* in *English Landscape*, he fills his canvas with unthatched cottages and their bare-legged inhabitants. This is *vulgar nature*—pray avoid it."

This, however, was written at a time when Gainsborough, though his example had not yet destroyed the old school, had achieved distinction as a landscape painter, and was able to sell his work without much difficulty. How little his landscape was appreciated at an earlier period may be judged from a story of an impudent attempt to improve one of his pictures by retouching, told by his friend of Bath and London, Prince Hoare:

"This eminent painter," says he, "whose contempt for the follies of mankind kept pace with his acute observation of them, was so disgusted at the blind preference paid to his powers of portraiture that for many years of his residence at Bath he regularly shut up all his landscapes in the back apartments of his house,

to which no common visitors were admitted. The landscape that first found its way into any collection was purchased of him by the late Henry Hoare, Esq., of Stourhead, on a friend's recommendation! and so little even then was the merit of Gainsborough duly estimated that Mr. Bampfylde, a dilettante in painting, being on a visit to Stourhead, offered to mend Gainsborough's sheep by repainting them, and was allowed to do so. They have been restored to their original *deficiencies* by the taste and good sense of the present possessor of that beautiful place."

The "present possessor" of Stourhead at the time Prince Hoare wrote was Sir Richard Colt Hoare, the well-known antiquary.

From the remarks of Prince Hoare and others it is evident that, putting portraiture apart, intelligent contemporary opinion regarded Gainsborough as we regard him now: as a great innovator, a man who recognised the beauties of English rural landscape and painted it as he saw it, comparatively uninfluenced by the artificialities of the school that was then in fashion. Yet there is a letter at the British Museum in which this forerunner of the naturalistic painters, who had so obstinately persisted in filling his canvases with rustic cottages and English peasantry, affects to despise the subjects of his own country. The letter, written at Bath about 1762, is addressed to Lord Hardwicke, who seems to have asked Gainsborough to paint a picture for him of some particular spot in which he was interested. The artist's reply is astonishing:

"Mr. Gainsborough presents his humble respects to Lord Hardwicke, and shall always think it an honour to be employed in anything for his Lordship, but with respect to real views from Nature in this country he has never seen any place that affords a Subject equal to the poorest imitations of Gaspar (Poussin) or Claude. Paul Sandby is the only man of genius, he believes, who has employed his pencil that way. Mr. G. hopes that Lord Hardwicke will not mistake his meaning, but if his Lord-

ship wishes to have anything tolerable of the name of Gainsborough, the subject altogether, as well as figures, &c., must be of his own brain; otherwise Lord Hardwicke will only pay for encouraging a man out of his way, and had much better buy a picture of some of the good Old Masters."

The reference to Sandby suggests that Lord Hardwicke wanted Gainsborough to paint a view of his seat. Sandby did work of this kind, and one of the pictures he contributed to the first exhibition of the Society of Artists in 1760 was *A View of Lord Harcourt's Seat at Newnham*.

Many stories of Gainsborough's musical tastes and acquirements were in circulation after his death, and they contrast strangely with the contemptuous opinion of the painter's skill given by the composer, William Jackson of Exeter. Jackson, whose early friendship with Gainsborough I have described in Chapter III, claimed in his essay on the artist to be better acquainted with his character than any other person. Further, he declared that in writing of Gainsborough he had divested himself of all partiality and had spoken of him as he really was. "As his skill in music has been celebrated, I will, before I speak of him as a painter, mention what degree of merit he possessed as a musician. When I first knew him at Bath, where Giardini had been exhibiting his then unrivalled powers on the violin; his excellent performance made Gainsborough enamoured of that instrument, and conceiving, like the servant maid in the *Spectator*, that the music lay in the fiddle, he was frantic until he possessed the *very instrument* which had given him so much pleasure, but seemed surprised that the music of it remained behind with Giardini." Jackson then gives a long and extravagant account of Gainsborough's passion for acquiring the instruments of eminent performers, in the vain hope that he might produce from them tones equal to those

of the original possessors, and concludes, "In this manner he frittered away his musical talents, and though possessed of ear, taste, and genius, he never had application enough to learn his notes. He scorned to take the first step, the second was of course out of his reach, and the third was unattainable." Jackson published his essay ten years after Gainsborough's death, and his statements were soon challenged. His estimate of the painter as a musician was thought absurd, and some critics did not hesitate to suggest that Jackson's unkind remarks were inspired by jealousy. Gainsborough, it was hinted, had not shown sufficient appreciation of Jackson's painting—which, by the way, is described as "contemptible" by another artist of the time.

Among those who found fault with the composer was a correspondent of the *Monthly Mirror*, who wrote as follows:

"'Gainsborough's profession,' says Mr. Jackson, 'was painting, and music was his amusement, yet there were times when music seemed to be his employment and painting his diversion.' This observation is well founded; but when the essayist proceeds to relate a series of improbable tales in order to expose the musical caprice of our great artist; when he represents him to have been so enamoured of Giardini's violin, of Abel's viol da gamba, and of Fischer's hautboy as to conceive that the excellence of each performer resided in his instrument; and lastly, when Gainsborough, who possessed ear, taste, and genius, and who sometimes made music *an employment*, is yet said to have scorned to take the first step, never having had application to *learn his notes*, surprise is excited by the contradictory assertion. Your present correspondent has more than once seen Gainsborough playing from notes; but not content with his own ocular testimony he has applied to several musicians of eminence who had a personal knowledge of the artist, and they unite in opposing Mr. Jackson's statement. One of them assures me that Abel composed a fugue purposely for his friend Gainsborough to practice on the viol da gamba. And this could not be done without

having learnt his notes. I am told that the above celebrated artist and musician, who had once been convivial associates, were of late years estranged from each other, and I therefore impute to a *lapsus memoriæ* what I cannot suppose to have arisen from intentional misrepresentation."

It is curious that Giardini, whose music so enraptured Gainsborough, should also have filled the breast of Romney with ambition to excel as a musician. Romney, when a youth, heard Giardini play at Whitehaven, and was so moved by the strains of his violin that he hesitated for a time as to whether he should devote himself to music or to painting. As we know, painting prevailed, but Romney, like Gainsborough, found in the violin the occasional solace of his leisure hours. Romney, however, not only played on fiddles but made them, before he came to London, and preserved to the end of his life the instrument that he regarded as his masterpiece. At his house Romney's friends sometimes heard him play upon a fiddle of his own manufacture in a room hung round with pictures he himself had painted.

Bate, who was a performer on the violoncello, speaks in high terms of the musical ability of Gainsborough, which he declared was sufficient in itself to have secured him celebrity. Some of his remarks, made a week after the artist's death, were prompted by the publication of a story told by Thicknesse, who oddly enough makes a similar suggestion to that of Jackson about the importance the painter attached to particular instruments. In this anecdote, which is not to be found in Thicknesse's life of Gainsborough, it is said that he—

"Having admired Abel's viol da gamba for its fine tone, without perhaps considering how much the power of the bow and touch contributed to it, Abel presented it to him. Gainsborough immediately stretched two large canvas frames, and declared he would paint him a couple of his best landscapes, and send them in return completely

finished and framed before he touched a brush for the first person in the kingdom, and did so."

A day or two later the editor of the *Morning Herald*, after correcting the statement about the defacement of the Duchess of Devonshire's portrait, to which I have already referred, corrects Thicknesse again as follows:

"The writer says, 'Mr. Gainsborough having admired Abel's viol da gamba for its fine tone, without perhaps considering how much the power of the bow contributed to it, Abel presented it to him.' What the writer says of the 'power of the bow, &c.,' evidently betrays how ignorant he is of Gainsborough's musical powers. He touched that instrument with the most exquisite skill, truth, and expression; and in an adagio movement, or largo, his richness of tone, expression, and feeling brought him very near indeed to Abel's standard. Let a musician who has heard him, speak, and he will confess this. Dr. Walcot, who is an excellent musical critic, after hearing Gainsborough about two years since, in an adjoining room, play a minuet of Vanhall's, and an allegro air, exclaimed, 'That must be Abel, for by God, no man besides can so touch an instrument!' Mr. Abel certainly presented Gainsborough with a viol da gamba, but this was in return for two valuable landscapes and several beautiful drawings. This instrument was worth little, but at Mr. Abel's death the instrument which Mr. Gainsborough seriously admired he purchased, and paid forty guineas for; and at the same sale the presents from the genius of the pencil to the musician sold for about £200, though they consisted only of a part of his liberal gifts."

One of the "liberal gifts" disposed of at the sale after Abel's death was acquired by another musical friend of Gainsborough's, the violoncellist Crosdill, whose portrait he sent to the Academy of 1780. The gift referred to was the painting lent by Crosdill to the Gainsborough exhibition held in 1814 at the British Institution, where it was catalogued as *Fox Dogs*. A critic of the exhibition of 1814, who knew Crosdill, says that the dogs at the time they were painted belonged to Abel, and that the picture was presented to him by Gainsborough in

return for lessons on the viol da gamba. He adds that when the painting of the dogs was first sent to Abel's house "the deception was so complete that the elder subject, irritated at the presence of a supposed rival, flew at her own resemblance with such fury that it was found necessary to place the picture in a situation where it was free from her jealous anger."

Another of Abel's pictures, a portrait of himself by Gainsborough, was sold in January 1788, six months after the musician's death, for only nine guineas, although, as the indignant chronicler reports, the frame alone was worth the money. This was possibly the same portrait of Abel by Gainsborough that was placed a few weeks later above the orchestra in the Concert Room at Hanover Square, where it took the place of a deplorable painting of Apollo which had previously figured there.

Although Jackson says that Gainsborough disliked singing, he appears to have had some interest in, or connection with, the Opera House. Six years before his death a writer in the *Morning Chronicle* expresses the opinion that all the recent improvements in the decoration of the Opera House did not compensate for the loss of Gainsborough's fine figure of Comic Dancing that formerly adorned it. He asks in what collection or cabinet this masterpiece is preserved, and hints that it may have been removed from the Opera House because every comic dancer on the stage suffered by comparison with it, whether French, English, or Italian. Gainsborough subsequently painted two other figures for the Opera House, one of which was placed on each side of the stage, but these were also removed in 1784, when Corinthian pillars were substituted for them.

Gainsborough, according to Bate, was skilled in all keyed instruments, but was most strongly attached to stringed ones. "He played always to the feelings, but, as he hated parade, he could never be prevailed upon

to display this talent except to his most select friends." There is other evidence to show that Gainsborough was a capable executant on more than one instrument. Parke, the oboe player, from whose memoirs I have quoted earlier in this volume, says that he was an excellent violin player; and more than forty years ago, in *Notes and Queries*, Mr. Edward F. Rimbault, son of the musician Stephen Francis Rimbault, wrote on the same subject: "This great painter was not only an enthusiastic lover of music, but a respectable performer on the harpsichord. I have frequently heard my father speak of his performance on this instrument in terms of great praise." Angelo, who remembered Gainsborough playing on his mother's harpsichord, states that he not only knew his notes but could accompany a slow movement on the harpsichord with taste and feeling both on the violin and the flute. Angelo describes as a caricature Jackson's sketch of the musical eccentricities of the painter, and adds: "Had Gainsborough outlived the witty musician he might perhaps with equal truth have given the world as satirical—not to say unfriendly—a posthumous description of Jackson's attempt with the palette and painting brushes." After reading what Rimbault and Angelo say about Gainsborough and the harpsichord, it is curious to recall Jackson's remark about the painter in connection with the same instrument: "He hated the harpsichord." It will be remembered that Gainsborough purchased a harpsichord from Messrs. Broadwood just before he left Bath for London, but this may have been for the use of his daughters, one of whom is said to have been an accomplished musician.

Whatever degree of skill Gainsborough may have possessed as a performer, it is certain that he was extraordinarily susceptible to the influence of music. A well-known instance of this is recorded by J. T. Smith in his life of Nollekens the sculptor. Smith, when he visited Gainsborough's studio in company with Nollekens found

THE BOY AT THE STILE

By permission of Sir Ralph Anstruther

the painter listening to a violin solo. He held up his finger to silence the newcomers while the musician, Colonel Hamilton, played on in such exquisite fashion, that Gainsborough promised him, if he would but continue, to give him the picture of *The Boy at the Stile*, which the Colonel had often wished to purchase. For half an hour the violinist held the painter entranced and then departed in a coach, taking with him the promised picture.

This story has been retold by most of Gainsborough's biographers, but as far as I am aware, none of them gives any clue to the identity of the Colonel, or information concerning the picture he received as a gift. The violinist was Colonel James Hamilton of the Second Regiment of the Foot Guards, the eldest son of Lord Anne Hamilton, and grandson of that Duke of Hamilton whose death in Hyde Park at the hand of Lord Mohun is described in a famous passage in Thackeray's *Esmond*. Colonel Hamilton, of Scottish descent on the side of his father, had many interests in England. Born at Bath, some years before Gainsborough settled in that city, he married an English wife who, by a singular chance, came from Hintlesham in Suffolk, a village between Sudbury, the town of Gainsborough's birth, and Ipswich. The Colonel, who was not only a fine musician, but a boxer who could stand up to Mendoza the champion of the prize-ring, was also a patron of the fine arts, and one of the fortunate few upon whom Gainsborough had bestowed gifts of the drawings that he would never part with for money. Colonel Hamilton's daughter married General Anstruther, who died with Moore at Corunna, leaving a son who succeeded to the baronetcy of Anstruther of Balcaskie. Gainsborough's *Boy at the Stile* is now in the possession of the present baronet, Sir Ralph Anstruther, through whose courtesy I am able to give a reproduction of this interesting little picture. It is an oil-painting on panel, thirteen inches by eleven, light and pleasant in tone.

Of the way in which Abel with his viol da gamba could influence Gainsborough a singular story was told soon after Abel's death, and while the painter was still living. It was related in the *St. James's Chronicle* by the same correspondent, "M.M.," who was in the studio of Gainsborough when he was painting the Prince of Wales's horse, and noticed an error in the drawing of the animal's foot. "M.M." speaks with due appreciation of Abel's talent, but asserts that it could only be estimated fully by those who had heard him play in the particular condition which alone drew forth his supremest excellencies.

"Justly admired as he was at his public performances, it was only a few of his intimate friends in private who were witnesses of his wonderful musical powers, to come at which, however, a bottle or two of good Burgundy before him and his viol da gamba within reach were necessary. In that situation friends would introduce the subject of the human passions, and Abel, not very capable of expressing in English his own sentiments, would catch up his viol da gamba and tell the story of Lefevre thereon until he brought tears to the eyes of his hearers; and not lay it down again till he had made his friend Gainsborough dance a hornpipe on the bottom of a pewter quart pot."

This undignified picture of the great painter in a moment of relaxation suggests that all the Burgundy was not consumed by Abel when he gave in music the pathetic tale of Sterne's poor Lieutenant. It will be remembered that Windham, in the story of the Sudbury election told in the first chapter, speaks of Gainsborough as intoxicated for a whole day, and another story related a few years after his death indicates that he occasionally overstepped the bounds of propriety with consequences dangerous to himself. In the correspondence about Gainsborough in the *Monthly Mirror* one of the writers tells a remarkable story which he says was communicated to him by a friend of Gainsborough's. The

friend had been present at a party where the artist himself told the tale only a few days after the adventure to which it refers:

"Gainsborough had dined one day with Abel the musician, where the company drank very freely, and although much intoxicated he insisted on going home alone. It being late and dark he fell on to the pavement, and unable to rise, lay there till he fell asleep. A woman of the town seeing a gentleman in this situation, placed him in a coach, and having taken him to her lodgings put him to bed in a state of insensibility. In the morning Gainsborough awoke, amazed to find himself in a strange room, and ignorant of the manner in which he got there. He now began to reflect on his situation, and getting silently out of bed to examine his pockets, found his pocket-book gone with its contents, and also his gold watch. Alarmed for the loss of these, and doubtful how to act, he again got into bed. In a short time the woman appeared, and finding her guest awake, and restless and uneasy, inquired the cause. He told her of his loss, and that in the book were bills to the amount of £430, which he had received the day before. She then told him that the book and watch were in her possession, and informed him of the manner in which she had discovered him, and the following circumstances. It was her misfortune, she told him, to be connected with a young man of bad habits and disposition, who, had he visited her on the previous night, as she expected, would have robbed him of everything valuable. Gainsborough gave her the odd £30, and having thanked her, departed. He continued a friend to her till his death."

In the notes on Gainsborough by Bate, already referred to, there are several other interesting pieces of information about the painter's habits and ideas. Jackson in his essay says that Gainsborough's conversation was sprightly but licentious, and that he hated the common topics "or any of a superior cast." Bate, on the other hand, declares that "in conversation his ideas and expression discovered a mind full of rich fancies and elegant truths—it is not an exaggeration to say that two

of the first writers of the age, Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Tickell, have frequently been witnesses of the most astonishing bursts of genius from him at these moments, and never fail to bear testimony of his pregnant imagination."

From another source we learn that Gainsborough, when dining with Garrick, made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson, whose peculiarities interested and amused him to an uncommon degree. But unfortunately through watching Johnson, the painter, himself a sensitive and impressionable man, acquired some of his habits of involuntary twitching and gesticulation. For a month or two Gainsborough could not keep still, sleeping or waking. "In fact," said he, "I became as full of megrims as the old literary leviathan himself, and fancied that I was changed into a Chinese automaton, and condemned incessantly to shake my head." While under the influence of what he called "the Johnsonian spell," Gainsborough made a sketch of Johnson's brown wig as he saw it above the top of a book of old English plays in which the short-sighted doctor buried his face when reading in an armchair at Garrick's. Dr. Johnson, it is said, always spoke respectfully of Gainsborough to the Garricks; mentioning the painter as "the ingenious Mr. Gainsborough," or "your sprightly friend."

We never think of Gainsborough as a painter of history, or of pictures that owe their motives to incidents borrowed from fiction or the drama, but Bate says that he was ambitious to paint Shakespearean subjects, and that had he lived we should have had from his hand illustrations of the Grave-digger in *Hamlet*, and of Timon in solitude. From the same authority we learn that the artist completed by candlelight the pictures of *The Woodman*, the *Peasant Smoking at his Cottage Door*, the *Boy at the Fire*, and the *Boy and Cat*. This is mentioned in a note on Sir Joshua's well-known comments in his Fourteenth Discourse on Gainsborough's practice of

painting by artificial light: a practice that was, in the President's opinion, "very advantageous and improving to an artist."

In the same discourse Sir Joshua spoke of another plan of Gainsborough's, of the usefulness of which he was more than doubtful. "He even framed a model of landscapes on his table; composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water." Years afterwards a veteran "Amateur of Painting" gave an interesting glimpse of Gainsborough amusing himself with his model landscapes. The old amateur was making an appeal to the public in aid of Dubourg, long an ingenious maker of cork models, but at this time infirm and a pensioner of the Academy; and in his letter he referred to the adaptability of cork, and declared that Gainsborough often used it in his table models.

"I had the honour," he said, "to be acquainted with that truly British genius at Bath, and have more than once sat by him of an evening and seen him make models —or rather thoughts—for landscape scenery on a little old-fashioned folding oak table, which stood under his kitchen dresser, such an one as I have often seen by the fireplace of a little clean, country ale-house. This table, held sacred for the purpose, he would order to be brought to his parlour, and thereon compose his designs. He would place cork or coal for his foregrounds; make middle grounds of sand and clay, bushes of mosses and lichens, and set up distant woods of broccoli."

It is easy to understand that the painter who liked to amuse himself with building up these toy landscapes was enchanted when he saw De Loutherbourg's *Eidophusikon*, an ingenious exhibition of moving pictures which the French artist showed on a small stage of his own contrivance. The *Eidophusikon* was for a time the fashion in London as an entertainment, and Gainsborough attended it night after night, and could talk of nothing else. One evening, when a storm at sea off the

coast near Naples was the subject of a peculiarly vivid representation, a real thunderstorm broke over London, to the terror of the superstitious among the audience, who ran to the lobby protesting against the presumption of De Loutherbourg for daring to imitate the mysteries of nature. Meanwhile the inventor, accompanied by Gainsborough and two or three other privileged friends, ascended to the roof of the theatre, from whence they could see the storm, and by looking down, witness at the same time the mimic representation on the stage. Gainsborough watched and listened intently for a few moments, then turned excitedly to his friend. "De Loutherbourg," he cried, "our thunder is the best!"

He afterwards made a little theatre of his own, in which he showed transparencies painted by himself, and lighted at the back by candles. It is said that he obtained excellent moonlight effects with his apparatus, which was exhibited with his collected works at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1885.

For the well-known anecdote about Mrs. Siddons and her long nose I have found no earlier authority than 1816, when it appeared, perhaps for the first time, in the *Monthly Magazine*. There it is given as told by an artist, "a Mr. Scott, of North Britain," who had painted a portrait of the actress. During the sitting Mr. Scott remarked that he found the drawing of her nose very difficult. "Ah!" said Mrs. Siddons, "Gainsborough was a good deal troubled in the same way. He altered and varied the shape a long while, and at last threw down the pencil, saying, 'Damn the nose—there's no end to it.'" There appears to be no contemporary reference to the equally familiar story told by Northcote, about Reynolds at the Artists' Club speaking of Gainsborough as the first landscape painter in Europe; and of Richard Wilson, who took the remark as a reflection upon himself, adding, "Well, Sir Joshua, it is my opinion that he is also the greatest portrait painter in Europe."

The story was, however, in circulation more than twenty years before Northcote told it in 1814.

Numerous portraits of Gainsborough have made his face familiar to us, but of his figure and general bearing we have no trustworthy description except that of Thicknesse, who speaks of the painter's modest deportment, and of "the elegance of his person." Fulcher's frequently quoted statement that he was tall and fair and well-proportioned was not written until 1855, sixty-seven years after Gainsborough's death. It was probably based merely on the girlish recollections of the same old lady at Sudbury who told Fulcher that she remembered Gainsborough when he visited the town in 1784, wearing "a rich suit of drab, with laced ruffles and a cocked hat." She described him as "gay, very gay, and good-looking." But Gainsborough in spite of his gaiety was a very shy man, and much addicted to blushing.

Although after his marriage Gainsborough seems to have abandoned modelling as a means of money-making he practised the art in a desultory fashion throughout his career. He made a small bust of the man who sat for *The Woodman* which is said to have "exhibited all the vigour of Vandyke." Thicknesse saw him model and colour from memory a head of Mrs. Sheridan after hearing her sing at a concert; and another model of Mrs. Sheridan's head was long in the possession of the late C. R. Leslie, R.A. Both, unfortunately, were destroyed by accident, and no example of Gainsborough's modelling is known to exist to-day. If the recollections of J. T. Smith can be trusted Gainsborough was an ardent admirer of fine penmanship, to examine which "pleased him beyond expression"; but the story of his obtaining excuses from school by forging his father's hand is of doubtful authenticity. Smith heard it from John Jackson, R.A., who never knew or even saw Gainsborough, and was only ten years old when that artist died.

CHAPTER XX

"THE BLUE BOY"

Of one famous picture, in some respects the most remarkable of all Gainsborough's works, nothing appears to have been said in print during the painter's lifetime, or for some years after his death. I have found no mention in any contemporary notes on Gainsborough of that full-length portrait of a youth in a Vandyke dress known as *The Blue Boy*, nor is it spoken of by Bate, Thicknesse, or other writers of the painter's obituaries. *The Blue Boy*, now in the collection of the Duke of Westminster, has been the subject of endless discussions and conjectures, but no one has ever been able to say with certainty when it was painted, or whom it represents. Everything, however, seems to connect the picture with a family of ironmongers in Soho, named Buttall, in whose possession it certainly was for some time. The earliest mention of *The Blue Boy*, so far as I am aware, is in Jackson's essay on Gainsborough, published ten years after the artist's death, when it is spoken of as already famous. "Perhaps his best portrait," says Jackson, "is that known among the painters as *The Blue Boy;* it was in the possession of Mr. Buttall, near Newport Market." This was written in January 1798, and another mention of the picture is to be found in 1808 in the sketch of Gainsborough's life by Edward Edwards, A.R.A., published in his *Anecdotes of Painters*. Edwards describes it as "a whole-length portrait of a young gentleman in a Vandyke dress, which picture obtained the title of *The Blue Boy*, from the colour of the satin in which the figure is dressed. It is not exaggerated praise to say that this figure might stand among those of Vandyke. It is now in the pos-

session of Mr. Hoppner, R.A." Edwards adds in a footnote: "This was the portrait of a Master Buttall, whose father was then a very considerable ironmonger in Greek Street, Soho."

The Blue Boy is next heard of in 1814, at the Gainsborough Exhibition at the British Institution. The picture was lent by Earl Grosvenor, who had purchased it from Hoppner. The exhibition of *The Blue Boy* in 1814 was its first appearance in public, unless the theory be accepted that it was sent by Gainsborough to the Academy of 1770, as No. 85, *Portrait of a Young Gentleman*. This theory is based on a letter written by Mary Moser, R.A., in 1770, to Fuseli, who was then in Rome. She speaks about the exhibition, and mentions, among other matters, that "Gainsborough is beyond himself in a portrait of a gentleman in a Vandyke habit." Another ground for thinking that the 1770 portrait was *The Blue Boy* is a conversation recorded by J. T. Smith in his *Book for a Rainy Day*. Smith, writing in November, 1832, says that the old artist John Taylor, then in his ninety-third year, had just called upon him, and gives a note of the conversation that ensued.

Smith asked him if he knew Gainsborough. "Oh, I remember him," said the old artist; "he was an odd man at times. I recollect my master Hayman coming home, after he had been to an exhibition, and saying what an extraordinary picture Gainsborough had painted of the Blue Boy; it is as fine as Vandyke. Who was the Blue Boy, Sir? Why, he was an ironmonger, but why so called I don't know. He lived at the corner of Greek and King Streets, Soho, an immensely rich man." Francis Hayman, R.A., under whom Taylor had studied, died in 1776, and the only whole-length of a young gentleman exhibited by Gainsborough before that year was the portrait already mentioned, No. 85, in 1770. If Taylor's memory is to be trusted, his statement is strongly corroborative of Mary Moser's letter.

In the absence of any direct evidence, it seems not unlikely that Gainsborough painted this masterpiece before the spring of 1770, perhaps when Jonathan Buttall, then a young man, was visiting Bath; and that the picture was exhibited at the Academy in that year, and was noticed and admired by Mary Moser and Francis Hayman, among others. It is possible, too, that it may have been sent later to the Buttalls' house in Soho, and remained there until some time after Gainsborough's death, when its sale made its merits known to the larger and more appreciative art public that had come into existence since it was exhibited at the Academy twenty years or more earlier. This, of course, is merely conjectural, but it seems to be a possible explanation of the singular fact that no writer mentions *The Blue Boy* during the fourteen years of Gainsborough's residence in London.

I have found some information about the picture in a note in the *European Magazine* for August, 1798, seven or eight months after Jackson's first mention of *The Blue Boy* in his essay on Gainsborough. The following is the paragraph in the *European Magazine*.

"MR. GAINSBOROUGH.

"One of the finest pictures that this great artist ever painted, and which might be put upon a par with any portrait that ever was executed, is that of a boy in a blue Vandyke dress, which is now in the possession of a tradesman in Greek Street. Gainsborough had seen a portrait of a boy by Titian for the first time, and having found a model that pleased him he set to work with all the enthusiasm of his genius. 'I am proud,' he said, 'of being of the same profession with Titian, and was resolved to attempt something like him.' "

The explanation given in this paragraph of Gainsborough's motive in painting a picture in which blue predominates does not agree with the story of the origin of *The Blue Boy* that has been current, and widely

accepted, for the last ninety years or more—since John Young, the engraver, wrote the first catalogue of the pictures at Grosvenor House. In that catalogue, published in 1821, Young says of *The Blue Boy:*

"This picture was painted in consequence of a dispute between Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and several other artists. The former having asserted that he thought the predominant colour in a picture ought to be blue, the others were of opinion that it was not possible to produce a fine picture on such a principle, and the artist in consequence painted this portrait as an illustration of his opinion. It was considered that he had proved his assertion, and his performance, having excited great attention and become a general theme of praise with the artists of that day, tended much to enhance the reputation he had already acquired."

The rights and wrongs of this supposed difference of opinion between Reynolds and Gainsborough have been the subject of many discussions between critics and others who have written about the two painters, but after a careful examination of the evidence it appears to me that there is nothing to dispute about. Young's story, of which he offers no sort of proof, is probably mythical, for not one of the earlier writers on Gainsborough says anything about the matter; and, as I have already stated, the earliest known mention of *The Blue Boy* is in 1798, ten years after Gainsborough's death. Bate, who in the *Morning Herald* pitted Gainsborough against Reynolds for years, says nothing in all his voluminous notes about disputes concerning schemes of colour, which he certainly would have done if, as asserted, Gainsborough had triumphed. Edward Edwards, A.R.A., is equally silent on the point in his life of Gainsborough published in 1808. Edwards had been an A.R.A. since 1772, and in close touch with the Royal Academy all the time. If it were well known that Gainsborough painted a picture to controvert the President, and succeeded in doing so, Edwards could not have been

ignorant of the fact; and in that case it is incredible that he should have refrained from mentioning it, especially as he places *The Blue Boy* first in his list of Gainsborough's pictures. J. T. Smith, the artist and writer, who was acquainted with both the painters, was a diligent collector of gossip about Gainsborough. In his writings he discusses *The Blue Boy* more than once, but without any hint of the Reynolds incident. Nor does Allan Cunningham make any reference to the dispute in his life of Gainsborough published in 1829.

Young, in his note on *The Blue Boy* in the Grosvenor House catalogue, says nothing about the theory that Gainsborough painted the picture to disprove a well-known passage in Sir Joshua's Discourses. The first suggestion of this appears to have been made by John Burnet, who is probably chiefly responsible for the wide circulation of the legend that connects Gainsborough with Reynolds in this matter. Burnet, the engraver of some of Wilkie's pictures, and an able writer on technical subjects connected with art, published in 1827 his *Practical Treatise on Painting*, in which he challenges the rule laid down by Sir Joshua that the masses of light in a picture should be of a warm colour, and that only a small proportion of the colder hues should be used to set off and support the warm tones. After giving his reasons for disagreeing with Sir Joshua, Burnet adds: "I believe Gainsborough painted the portrait of a boy dressed in blue, now in the possession of Lord Grosvenor, to show the fallacy of this doctrine." Burnet does not mention Young's book or the existence of any general opinion on the subject, but says, "I" believe, as if it were a new idea of his own. His book had a large sale among artists and students, and went through several editions.

Once started, the story soon became widespread. Passavant mentions it in 1836 in his *Tour of a German Artist in England;* Mrs. Jameson elaborates it in her Grosvenor House catalogue of 1844; and Waagen in

1848 follows Mrs. Jameson. It reappears in 1854 in the *Handbook for Young Painters*, where C. R. Leslie writes:

"Gainsborough, it is said, painted his portrait of a boy in a blue dress by way of refuting the objection Sir Joshua made to light blue as a large mass. But I agree with the opinion of Sir Thomas Lawrence, that in this picture the difficulty is 'ably combated' rather than vanquished."

Leslie's introduction of the opinion of Lawrence, who was by way of being a contemporary of Gainsborough, gives to the legend an air of antiquity that is altogether fictitious. Lawrence's opinion was not given until 1829, at the very end of his life, and only then in connection with the book in which the story appears to have originated. Lawrence, writing to Burnet about the *Practical Treatise on Painting*, says:

"Agreeing with you in so many points, I still venture to differ from you in your question with Sir Joshua. Infinitely various as Nature is there are still two or three truths that limit her variety, or rather that limit Art in the imitation of her. I should instance for one the ascendancy of white objects, which can never be departed from with impunity, and again the union of colour with light. Masterly as the execution of that picture is, I always feel a never-changing impression on my eye that the Blue Boy of Gainsborough is a difficulty boldly combated, not conquered."

It is clear that this letter of Lawrence's refers only to the individual opinion of Burnet on the dictum of Sir Joshua.

Jonathan Buttall, the supposed original of the picture of *The Blue Boy*, succeeded his father in the ironmonger's business carried on at the corner of Greek Street and King Street, Soho, and apparently conducted it until 1796, when his stock-in-trade and a quantity of other property were sold by Sharpe & Coxe, the auctioneers. The property sold included "a valuable collection of Gainsborough's drawings, a few capital pictures

by Gainsborough, Gainsborough Dupont, and others, a small library of books, judiciously selected, books of music and several musical instruments, and about a hundred and sixty dozen of choice old red port." The pictures and musical instruments suggest a community of tastes with Gainsborough, with whom Buttall seems to have been on intimate terms. It has not, I think, been remarked by Gainsborough's biographers that Buttall was one of the "few of those friends he most respected," whom the painter desired should attend his funeral at Kew. Buttall had property at Ipswich, where Gainsborough lived in his youth, and it is possible that their acquaintance was of long standing. The ironmonger survived the artist for more than seventeen years. He died towards the close of 1805, and the *Morning Herald* of December 2nd contains the following announcement: "Died on Friday last, at his house in Oxford Street, Jonathan Buttall, Esq., a gentleman whose amiable manners and good disposition will cause him to be ever regretted by his friends."

APPENDIX A

TWELVE LETTERS FROM GAINSBOROUGH TO WILLIAM JACKSON OF EXETER

Now in the Possession of the Royal Academy of Arts

I

BATH, *Aug.* 23.

MY DEAR JACKSON,—Will it—(damn this pen)—will it serve as any apology for not answering your last obliging letter to inform you that I did not receive it of near a month after it arrived, shut up in a music-book at Mr. Palmer's. I admire your notions of most things, and do agree with you that there might be exceeding pretty pictures painted of the kind you mention. But are you sure you don't mean instead of the flight into Egypt, my flight out of Bath! Do you consider, my dear maggotty sir, what a deal of work history pictures require to what little dirty subjects of coal horses and jackasses and such figures as I fill up with; no, you don't consider anything about that part of the story; you design faster than any man or any thousand men could execute. There is but one flight I should like to paint, and that's yours *out* of Exeter, for while your numerous and polite acquaintance encourage you to talk so cleverly, we shall have but few productions, real and substantial productions. But to be serious (as I know you love to be), do you really think that a regular composition in the Landskip way should ever be filled with History, or any figures but such as fill a place (I won't say stop a gap) or create a little business for the eye to be drawn from the trees in order to return to them with more glee. I did not know that you admired those tragic-comic pictures, because some have thought that a regular History Picture may have too much background, and the composition be hurt by not considering

what ought to be principal. But I talk now like old square-toes. There is no rule of that kind, say you.

But then, says I,
Damme you lie!

If I had but room and time before Palmer seals up his packet, I'd trim you. I have been riding out with him this morning. I wish I had been with him in Devonshire. —Adieu, T. G.

II

My dear Jackson,—To show you that I can be as quick as yourself, tho: I shall never be half a quarter so clever, I am answering your letter the very moment I received if from Mr. Palmer. I shall not tease you upon the subject of the *flight*, as we are now upon a *better* and that which above all others I have long wished to touch upon, because tho: I'm a rogue in talking upon Painting and love to *seem* to take things wrong, I can be both serious and honest upon any subjects thoroughly pleasing to me; and such will ever be those wherein your happiness and our friendship are concerned, let me then throw aside that damned *grinning* trick of mine for a moment, and be as serious and stupid as a Horse. Mark then, that ever since I have been quite clear in your being a real genius, so long have I been of opinion that you are dayly throwing away your gift upon *Gentlemen*, and only studying how you shall become the *Gentleman* too, now, damn gentlemen, there is not such a set of enemies to a real artist in the world as they are if not kept at a proper distance.

They think (and so may you for a while) that they reward your merit by their Company and notice; but I, who blow away all the chaff, and, by G—, in their eyes too if they don't stand clear, know that they have but one part worth looking at, and that is their Purse; their Hearts are seldom near enough the right place to get a sight of it. If any gentlemen come to my house my man asks them if they want me (provided they don't seem satisfied with seeing the pictures), and then he asks *what* they would please to want with me; if they say a picture, Sir, please to walk this way and my master will speak to you; but if they only want me to bow and compliment—Sir, my master is walk'd out—and so, my

dear, there I nick them. Now, if a *Lady*, a handsome Lady, comes, 'tis as much as his life is worth to send her away so. But this is to—— . . . as you knew this before . . . [the letter is torn here] I wish you lived a little nearer so that I could see you often, or a good deal nearer if you please. I have no acquaintance now, nor will I till I can say within myself *I approve my choice*. There are very few *clever* fellows worth hanging—and that consideration makes you the more worthy.—Adieu for want of room, I'll write again very soon.

T. G.

BATH, *Sept.* 2, 1767.

III

BATH, *Sept.* 14*th.*

MY DEAR JACKSON,—Now you seem to lay too much stress upon me, and show yourself to be a serious fellow. I question if you could splice all my letters together whether you would find more connection and sense in them than in many landskips joined, where half a tree was to meet half a church to make a principal object. I should not think of my pretending to reproach you who are a regular system of philosophy, a reasonable creature, and a *particular fellow*. If I meant anything (which God knows if I did) it was this, that many a real genius is lost in the fictitious character of the gentleman ; and that, as many of those creatures are continually courting you, possibly you might forget what I, without any merit to myself, remember from meer shyness, namely, that they make no part of the artist. Depend upon it, Jackson, you have more sense in your little finger than I have in my whole Body and Head ; I am the most inconsistent, changeable being, so full of fits and starts, that if you mind what I say, it will be shutting your eyes to some purpose. I am only sensible of meaning, and of having once said, that I wished you lived nearer to me ; but that this wish does not proceed from a selfishness rather than any desire of correcting any step of yours I much doubt. Perhaps you can see that, though I can not. I might add perhaps in my red-hot way, that damme Exeter is no more a place for a Jackson than Sudbury in Suffolk is for a G. ! But all the rest you know better than I can tell you, I'm certain. . . . I look upon this letter as one of my most agreeable performances, so

don't let's have any of your airs. I could say a deal more, but what can a man say pent up in a corner thus. . . . Yours.

T. G.

This letter is not addressed to "Mr. William Jackson," as all the others are, but to "William Shakespeare Jackson, Esq."

IV

Dear Jackson,—Is it true that you broke your neck in going home? I have not seen Palmer, but only the day after your departure to learn the truth. It is a current report here that the great and the amiable Mr. Jackson got a mischief in going home, that you had tied your horse by the head so fast that his head was dragged off in going down a hill, and that you ordered the driver (like a near-sighted man) to go back for the horse's body, and that the chaise horses frightened at the sight of the boy's riding up upon a horse without a head took fright and made for Exeter. And that you, unwilling to leave your horse in that condition, took a flying leap out at the window and pitched head foremost into a hollow tree. Miss D—l has heard this story, and says if it be true she'll never touch a Note again. I hope to hear from either Palmer or Bearing when I see them some more favourable account of you. I'm but little disposed to pity you, because you slipp't away so d—d sly, without giving me any more time than you had to jump into the hollow tree. Pray, if your d—d long fingers escaped, let's hear from you soon, and in the meantime I'll pray that it's all a lie, &c.

Bath, *Feb. 6th.*

Will you meet me at London any time, and I'll order business accordingly.

V

Dear Jackson,—If your neck is but safe damn your horse's head. I am so pleased with both your remarks, and your indigo, that I know not which to admire most, or which to think of most immediate use; the indigo you leave me in doubt whether there be any more to be got, whereas I am pretty sure of some more of your

thoughts now we are fairly settled into a correspondence ; your observations are like all yours, just, natural, and not common ; your indigo is cleare, like your understanding, and pure as your music, not to say exactly of the same blue as that Heaven from whence all your ideas are reflected ! To say the truth of your indigo, 'tis delightful, so look sharp for some more (and I'll send you a drawing), and for your thoughts, I have often flattered myself I was just going to think *so*. The lugging in objects, whether agreeable to the whole or not, is a sign of the least genius of anything, for a person able to collect in the mind, will certainly groupe in the mind also ; and if he cannot master a number of objects so as to introduce them in friendship, let him do but a few, and that you know, my Boy, makes simplicity. One part of a picture ought to be like the first part of a tune, that you guess what follows, and that makes the second part of the tune, and so I'm done—My respects to Mr. Tremlett. Bearing did not call upon me. I hear he's gone from Bath.

The harp is packed up to come to you, and you shall take it out with Miss ——, as I shall not take anything for it but give (it) to you to twang upon. . . .

VI

My dear Jackson,—I will suppose all you say about my exhibition Pictures to be true, because I have not time to dispute it with you. I am much obliged to you and wish I could spend a few days with you in town. But I have begun a large picture of Tommy Linley and his sister, and cannot come. I suppose you know the Boy is bound for Italy the first opportunity. Pray do you remember carrying me to a picture-dealer's somewhere by Hanover Square, and my being struck with the leaving and touch of a little bit of tree ; the whole picture was not above 8 or 10 inches high and about a foot long. I wish if you had time that you'd inquire what it might be purchased for and give me one line more whilst you stay in town.

If you can come this way home one may enjoy a day or two of your company. I shall be heartily glad. I can always make up one bed for a friend without any

trouble, and nobody has a better claim to that title, or a better title to that claim than yourself.—Believe me, dear Jackson, yours most sincerely;

THOS. GAINSBOROUGH.

May 11th, 1768.

My compliments attend all inquiring friends, and damn this pen.

VII

BATH, *Sept. 2nd.*

MY DEAR JACKSON,—I should have wrote to you sooner, but have been strangely hurried since I left Exeter. In my way home I met with Lord Shelborne, who insisted on my making him a short visit, and I don't repent going (tho' I generally do, to all Lords' houses) as I met with Mr. Dunning there. There is something exclusive of the clear and deep understanding of that gentleman most exceedingly pleasing to me. He seems the only man who talks as Giardini plays, if you know what I mean; he puts no more motion than what goes to the real performance, which constitutes that ease and gentility peculiar to damned clever fellows, each in their way. I observe his forehead jets out, and mine runs back a good deal more than common, which accounts for some difference betwixt our parts. No doubt with me but that he has an uncommon share of brains, and those disposed to overlook all the rest of his parts, let them be ever so powerful. He is an amazing compact man in every respect, and as we get a sight of everything by comparison, only think of the difference betwixt Mr. Dunning almost motionless, with a mind brandishing like lightning from corner to corner of the earth, whilst a long cross-made fellow only flings his arms about like thrashing flails without half an idea of what he would be at—and besides this neatness in outward appearance, his storeroom seems cleared of all French ornaments and gingerbread work, everything is simplicity and elegance and in its proper place, no disorder or confusion in the furniture, as if he was going to remove. Sober sense and great acuteness are marked very strong in his face, but if those were all I should only admire him as a great lawyer, but there is genius

(in our sense of the word). (It) shines in all he says. In short, Mr. Jackson of Exeter, I begin to think there is something in the air of Devonshire that grows clever fellows. I could name four or five of you, superior to the product of any other county in England.

Pray make my compliments to one Lady who is neat about the mouth, if you can guess, and believe me most faithfully yours, THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

VIII

MY DEAR JACKSON,—I am much obliged to you for your last letter, and the lessons recd. before. I think I now begin to see a little into the nature of modulation and the introduction of flats and sharps; and when we meet you shall hear me play extempore. My friend Abel has been to visit me, but he made but a short stay, being obliged to go to Paris for a month or six weeks, after which he has promised to come again. There never was a poor devil so fond of harmony with so little knowledge of it, so that what you have done is pure charity. I dined with Mr. Duntze in expectation (and indeed full assurance) of hearing your scholar Miss Flond play a little, but was for the second time *flung*. . . . I'm sick of Portraits and wish very much to take my viol-da-gamba and walk off to some sweet village, where I can paint landskips and enjoy the fag-end of life in quietness and ease. But these fine ladies and their tea-drinkings, dancings, husband-huntings, &c, &c. &c., will fob me out of the last ten years, and I fear miss getting husbands too. But we can say nothing to these things you know, Jackson, we must jogg on and be content with the jingling of the bells, only, d— it I hate a dust, the kicking up a dust, and being confined in harness to follow the track whilst others ride in the waggon, under cover, stretching their legs in the straw at ease, and gazing at green trees and blue skies without half my *Taste*. That's d—d hard. My comfort is I have five viols-da-gamba, three Jayes and two Barak Normans.—Adieu,

THO. GAINSBOROUGH.

BATH, *June 4th.*

[Jaye and Barak Norman were well-known makers of musical instruments.]

IX

DEAR JACKSON,—Methinks I hear you say all friendship is my —— and all sincerity my ——, only because I have not had time since my hurry of finishing two full-lengths and a landskip for the exhibition, to answer your two last letters. But don't be in a hurry to determine anything about *me;* if you are, ten to one you are wrong, those who can claim a longer acquaintance with me than Mr. Jackson knowing at this moment but very little of my real temper. I'm heartily sorry that you don't come to reside near Bath, as you expected, not because you are disappointed of the advantage of conversing with me and my works, but because I am deprived of the much greater advantages of sucking your sensible skull, and of the opportunity I might possibly have of convincing you how much I shall always esteem your various and extensive talents, not to mention what I think still better worth mentioning, namely, your honesty and undesigning plainness and openness of soul. They say your mind is not *worldly*—no, said I, because its *heavenly*. . . . I think a tollerable reason, Master Matthews. I fear, my lad, I shall have it this exhibition, for never was such slight dabs presented to the eyes of a million. But I grow dauntless out of mere stupidity as I grow old, and I believe that any one who plods on in any one way, especially if that one way will bring him bread and cheese as well as a better, will grow the same. . . . . Mr. Palmer was going to London the last time I saw him, so I fear it may be some time before you receive this letter, but as soon as you can, do show how well you can forgive by a speedy answer. Thanks for the indigo—a little of it goes a great way, which is lucky.—Adieu.

X

DEAR JACKSON,—I will confess to you that I think it unpardonable in me not to speak seriously upon a subject of so much consequence as that which has employed us of late; therefore you shall have my thoughts without any humming, swearing, or affectation of wit. Indeed, my affection for you would naturally have led me that way before now, but that I am soon lost if I

pretend to reasoning; and you being all regularity and judgment, I own provoke me the more to break loose, as he who cannot be correct is apt to *direct* the eye with a little freedom of handling; but no more of it. I must own your calculations and comparison betwixt our different professions to be just, provided you remember that in mine a man may do great things and starve in a garret if he does not conquer his passions and conform to the common eye in chusing that branch which they will encourage and pay for. Now there cannot be that difference between music and painting unless you suppose that the musician voluntarily shuns the only profitable branch, and will be a chamber counsel when he might appear at the bar. You see, sir, I'm out of my subject already. But now in again. If music will not satisfy you without a certainty (which by the by is nonsense, begging your pardon, for there is no such thing in any profession), then I say be a painter. You have more of the painter than half those who get money by it, that I will swear, if you desire it, upon a Church Bible. You want a little drawing and the use of pencil and colours, which I could put into your hands in one month, without meddling with your head; I propose to let that alone, if you'll let mine off easy. There is a branch of Painting next in profit to portrait, and quite in your power without any more drawing than I'll answer for your having, which is Drapery and Landskip backgrounds. Perhaps you don't know that whilst a face painter is harassed to death the drapery painter sits and earns five or six hundred a year, and laughs all the while. Your next will be to tell me what I know as well as yourself, viz., that I am an impertinent coxcomb. This I know, and will speak out if you kill me for it, you are too modest, too diffident, too sensible, and too honest ever to push in music.—Sincerely,

T. G.

XI

Dear Jackson,—I thought you was sick as I had not seen you for some days and last night when I went to the play in the hopes of seeing you there Mr. Palmer confirmed my fears; I fully intended putting on my thick shoes this morning, but have been hindered by

some *Painter Plagues;* pray send me word whether there is any occasion for Dr. Moysey to come to you in *Palmer's opinion;* damn your own, for you are too much like me to know how it is with you. The Doctor shall come in a moment if there is the least occasion, and I know he will with pleasure without your hand touching your breeches pocket. I'll be with you soon to feel your pulse myself. —So God mend you.

T. GAINSBOROUGH.

Tuesday morning.

I have spoilt a fine piece of drawing paper because I had no other at hand, and in a hurry to know how you are.

[This letter is written on a good-sized piece of drawing paper.]

XII

Jan. 25, 1777.

DEAR JACKSON,—I suppose I never drew a portrait half so like the sitter as my silence since the receipt of your last resembles neglect and ingratitude, owing to two of the crossest accidents that ever attended a poor fiddler. First and most unfortunately, I have been four times after Bach, and have never laid eyes on him; and secondly and most provokingly, I have had a parcel made up of two drawings and a box of pencils, such as you wrote for, ever since the day after I received your favour enclosing the *Tenths*, and directed for you to go by the Exeter coach, which has laid in my room by the neglect of two blockheads, one my nephew, who is too proud to carry a bundle *under his arm*, though his betters, the journeymen-Tailors, always carry their foul shirts so; and my d—— cowardly footman, who forsooth is afraid to peep into the street for fear of being pressed for sea service, the only service God Almighty made him for; so that, my dear Jackson, if it was not for your being endowed with Jobe's patience I should think myself deservedly for ever shut out of your favour; but surely I shall catch Bach soon to get you an answer to your letter, and for the drawings if I don't carry them myself to the inn to-morrow! There is a letter of nonsense enclosed with the drawings to plague you once more

about 6ths and 10ths which you may read as you hap to be in humour when you see the drawings. Till then I'm sure you can't bear the sight of my odious hand, so no more at present as the saying is, but yours sincerely,

T. G.

Pall Mall.

You hear, I suppose, that all Lords and Members have given up their privilege of franking to ease the Taxes. I'm sorry for it.

APPENDIX B

Gainsborough at Bath

Some valuable information about the earlier period of Gainsborough's life at Bath is contained in a fragment of unpublished autobiographical memoir by Ozias Humphry, R.A., in the possession of the Royal Academy. Humphry from 1760 to 1764 lodged at Bath in the house of Thomas Linley the musician, father of the beautiful and gifted girl who was afterwards married to Richard Brinsley Sheridan. "Mr. Gainsborough," says Humphry, "who was passionately fond of music as well as painting, lived in great intimacy with this family and never failed to communicate useful hints or good general instruction." The hints and instruction were given in connection with the musical education of little Tom Linley, who died before the promise of his boyhood was fulfilled; to the regret of Mozart, who declared that "had Linley lived he would have been one of the greatest ornaments of the musical world."

Humphry, who at this time was but a youth, frequently accompanied Gainsborough in his summer afternoon rambles in the country round Bath; "to which and succeeding excursions the public are indebted for the greater part of the sketches and more finished drawings from time to time produced by that whimsical, ingenious, but very deserving artist. Mr. Gainsborough painted during these years several landscapes of extraordinary merit that were mostly executed by candle light, to which he was much accustomed." Gainsborough's favourite sketching localities near Bath are said by another contemporary to have been the woods at Claverton and Warley, where he frequently passed the day with only a sandwich or some bread and cheese in his pocket.

The notes by Humphry on costume in its connection with the resemblance of Gainsborough's portraits to his sitters should be compared with the great painter's own

remarks on the subject contained in his letters to Lord Dartmouth, in Chapter IV. "In Bath," writes Humphry, "his general practice was in portraiture, in which he had peculiar excellence and frequently produced pictures of surprising resemblance and perfection. Likeness alone was all he avowed to aim at; from this concentration it must often have happened that although his pictures were exactly like and to the parties for whom they were painted, and their families, highly satisfactory at the time whilst the prevailing modes were daily seen and the friends approved and beloved in them, yet the satisfaction arising from this resemblance was lessening daily as the fleeting fashions varied, and were changing from time to time. The portrait of Mr. Quin (see p. 38) was painted about this period, and was of uncommon force and vigour, with a truth and animation beyond Mr. Gainsborough's usual performance. As the original had bold and expressive features, and was singularly calculated for representation, few pictures have ever been more popular or maintained their credit with less decadency upon the minds of beholders. This portrait was painted within a few months of the great actor's death, so that his dress and general appearance never varied from the time it was completed, and is therefore an exception to the above observation."

But the most important of Humphry's comments on Gainsborough is a description of his methods of portraiture, and especially of his practice of painting in a subdued light in the earlier stages. Other contemporaries have mentioned this habit of working in semi-darkness, but Humphry's description is far more valuable not only because it is fuller, but because it is written by a painter, who could understand Gainsborough's object and intentions better than any layman.

"Exact resemblance in his portraits," writes Humphry, "as has already been said, was Mr. Gainsborough's constant aim, to which he invariably adhered. These pictures, as well as his landscapes, were frequently wrought by candle-light, and generally with great force and likeness. But his painting room—even by day a kind of darkened twilight—had scarcely any light, and I have seen him, whilst his subjects have been sitting to him, when neither they nor the pictures were scarcely discernible.

"If the canvases were of three-quarter size he did not desire they should be loosened upon the straining frames, but if they were half lengths or whole lengths he never failed to paint with the canvas loose, secured by small cords, and brought to the extremity of the frame, and having previously determined and marked with chalk upon what part of the canvas the face was to be painted it was so placed upon the easel as to be close to the subject he was painting; which gave him an opportunity (as he commonly painted standing) of comparing the dimensions and effect of the copy with the original, both near and at a distance. By this method, with incessant study and exertion, he acquired the power of giving the masses and general forms of his models with the utmost exactness. Having thus settled the groundwork of his portraits he let in (of necessity) more light for the finishing of them; but his correct preparation was of the last importance and enabled him to secure the proportions of his features, as well as the general contour of objects, with uncommon truth."

Humphry's explanation of Gainsborough's reason for painting on a loose canvas is not well expressed, but to me it seems that the artist wished for the sake of constant comparison to work with his painted head as nearly as possible side by side with the original. If the canvas were a small one (what he calls a three-quarters, and we call a head-size) this would be easy. But in working on a large scale such as a half or whole length a considerable space of canvas would separate the living from the painted head. Gainsborough therefore, having, as Humphry says, marked with chalk the position of the head, had the canvas released from the stretcher and fastened temporarily by strings at the back. He could then if he wished pull the canvas over until the space intended for the head was close to the edge of the stretcher, and as near as possible to the face of the sitter.

William Pearce

Gainsborough's letters show that he was on the most intimate terms with a certain William Pearce whose identity has hitherto been a matter of speculation. Sir Walter Armstrong and F. G. Stephens describe him as a doctor, of Bath, but no proof of this is to be found in

Gainsborough's correspondence. In the well-known letter (p. 210) about a projected visit to the Lakes with Kilderbee, the expression "your Grays and Dr. Brownes" seems to indicate that the painter was writing to some kind of poet or literary man; and the brief note written by Gainsborough in his last illness suggests that Pearce resided in London, or at all events not at Bath:

"My dear Pearce,—I am extremely obliged to you and Mrs. Pearce for your kind inquiries; I hope I am now getting better, as the swelling is considerably increased and more painful. We have just received some cheeses from Bath, and beg the favour of you to accept two of them.—My dear Pearce, ever yours sincerely,

"Thomas Gainsborough."

The William Pearce who corresponded with Gainsborough was, I believe, an amateur of literary tastes who wrote the libretto for several comic operas that were produced at Covent Garden in the later years of the eighteenth century. He was intimate with Henry Bate, and was the writer of the verses (p. 289) eulogising the hospitality of the parson-editor at Bradwell, where perhaps he and Gainsborough were at times fellow-guests. When Gainsborough's portrait of William Pearce was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, in 1885, its owner, Mr. J. Rubens Powell, stated that he bought it of a Mr. Luck, who was the son-in-law of William Pearce. Mr. Powell learned, apparently from Luck, that the portrait was painted as a wedding present for Pearce, who lived to be over ninety; and I think there can be little doubt that he was the William Pearce whose death is thus announced in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of April, 1842:—"In Cadogan Place, Chelsea, aged 91, William Pearce, Esq., for a number of years Chief Clerk of the Admiralty; formerly a frequent Correspondent of this Magazine."

There is a letter at the British Museum from this William Pearce which connects him with Gainsborough. It is dated Cadogan Place, March 22, 1824, and addressed to George Chalmers, Secretary to the Board of Trade, who had apparently asked Pearce (on behalf of a Mr. Erskine) to give him a characteristic letter of Gainsborough's for some purpose with which George the Fourth was connected. Pearce writes: "The letter I have

sent to him of the late Mr. Gainsborough is one most appropriate, as it relates to a transaction with his Majesty when Prince of Wales, and when the *royal eye* traverses the pages (which I judge he will) he will be struck with it." During the past half century two or three paintings or drawings sold at Christie's have been described in each case as "presented by the artist to W. Pearce, who gave it to the Right Hon. J. W. Croker." Croker was Secretary to the Admiralty at the time that Pearce was Chief Clerk. One of the works thus sold at Christie's became the property of Lord Leighton, whose favourite artist was Gainsborough. At Leighton's sale in 1896 it was bought for £304 by Messrs. Agnew, for Mr. George Salting, who bequeathed it to the British Museum. Pearce's portrait by Gainsborough, mentioned above, was exhibited in June, 1915, at Messrs. Agnew's gallery. The writer whose name Gainsborough couples with that of Gray the poet was probably Dr. John Brown, a long letter by whom extolling the picturesque charms of Derwentwater, printed in the *Monthly Ledger* in 1775, may have been seen by Gainsborough.

"The Mall, St. James's Park"

On p. 349 it is stated that this famous picture (now the property of Sir Audley Neeld) was sold at Christie's with the Kilderbee collection in 1829; and with this sale originated the generally accepted belief that *The Mall* was the property of Gainsborough's Ipswich friend, Samuel Kilderbee. But there is nothing to show that the picture was ever in Samuel Kilderbee's possession, and there is direct evidence that it was owned by his fellow-townsman, the artist George Frost. Thomas Green of Ipswich records in his diary that in 1809 he was taken by Colonel Dupuis to see Samuel Kilderbee's pictures, and he notes that they included "three fine landscapes by Gainsborough, the Rubens of English landscape painters." He says nothing about *The Mall* in connection with Kilderbee, but when he called on George Frost eleven years later (October 16, 1820), he found the old artist engaged in "copying his large Gainsborough, the Mall of St. James's Park." Green did not much like *The Mall*, which he seems to have seen for the first time on this occasion, and describes it as

"an airy but flimsy production, evincing much dexterity and skill in colouring, but still not a picture." He also expresses the opinion that Gainsborough has proved the ruin of Frost as an artist.

George Frost died in 1821, a few months after Green's visit to his studio, and in a lengthy obituary note in the *Gentleman's Magazine* he is said to have owned *The Mall* and other works by Gainsborough, "which will now be sold." Apparently they were disposed of privately, as there were no Gainsboroughs among the pictures belonging to Frost's widow when her property was sold after her death a few years later. A catalogue of the sale is in the possession of Mr. Frank Brown, of Ipswich, the author of a valuable illustrated monograph of George Frost. Mr. Brown's grandmother bought at Mrs. Frost's sale the copy of *The Mall* that Green saw in progress. It is still owned by the family, and is identical in detail with Sir Audley Neeld's picture, but bluer in its general tone. Mr. Brown tells me that there is an old local tradition that the ladies who figure in the picture are portraits of typical Suffolk beauties. It is possible that *The Mall* was sold by Frost's widow to Samuel Kilderbee's son; or to his grandson, S. H. Kilderbee, who was the seller of the pictures at Christie's in 1829. It could not have been acquired by Samuel Kilderbee himself, as he died in 1813.

Gainsborough Dupont's Studio

An interesting glimpse of Dupont's studio is given by O'Keefe in his *Recollections*. It shows that Dupont, who imitated his uncle's manner in painting as exactly as he could, also shared his liking for working by artificial light. O'Keefe writes: "About this time (1794) my old friend Quick took me to see Gainsborough Dupont the portrait painter, at his house. Mr. Harris had employed him to paint, for himself, the principal performers at Covent Garden theatre in their most distinguished characters. In the front room were many portraits in different states of forwardness. The Right Hon. William Pitt was on the easel; Governor Hastings standing on the floor; and against the wall Quick in 'Spado,' with his little pistol—which he calls his barrel-organ—in his hand. On the door of the back drawing-

room opening I was surprised, and not a little shocked to see the room darkened (daylight shut out); and lighted by a large lamp hanging from the centre of the ceiling there stood a man half-naked, a ghastly figure with a blanket round him, staring wildly and holding a pole in his outstretched hand. This was Holman in the character of Edgar (Mad Tom); Gainsborough Dupont was painting him. I heard it was the custom of Dupont to paint much by lamplight."

Pietro Francesco Mola

The admiration of Gainsborough for this artist has not, I think, been noticed by any of the biographers of the English painter, but that it was considerable is evident by a note written by Desenfans, who claimed "to have lived in the strictest habit of friendship until his expiring moments" with Gainsborough, and was certainly most intimate with him. "Gainsborough," says Desenfans, "was never in Italy, and to atone in some measure for the injury which that negligence might prove to him, he was in the habit of borrowing, and sometimes purchasing, works of that school as objects of study. One day, finding him attentively examining the fine picture of Mola that represents *Jupiter and Leda*, from which it was with difficulty he could be parted, we inquired what it was that so particularly caught his attention. 'It is this manner of painting,' replied the modest artist, 'which I shall never attain, for Mola appears to have made it his own by patent.'" The tradition that Gainsborough was influenced by Mola appears to have died out, but it was mentioned sixty years ago by a writer in the *Art Journal*, who, in commenting on the pictures in the Bicknell collection by Gainsborough, says, "He was such an admirer of Mola that he frequently painted with a picture of that master placed near him."

The Incorporated Society of Artists

Gainsborough, as stated on p. 44, was elected a Fellow of the Incorporated Society of Artists of Great Britain in March, 1765, and he contributed regularly to its exhibitions for several years. At the annual meeting

on October 18, 1768, he was elected to a Directorship of the Society, and on the same day his old Ipswich friend, Joshua Kirby, was made President. Gainsborough, however, declined to accept office, and his letter of refusal must have grieved Kirby deeply. The letter, addressed to "Joshua Kirby, Esq., to be left at the Turk's Head, Gerrard Street, St. Ann's, London," is as follows:

"Mr. President and Gentlemen, Directors of the Society of Artists of Great Britain.

"I thank ye for the honour done me in appointing me one of your Directors, but for a particular reason I beg leave to resign, and am, Gentlemen, your most obliged and obedient Humble Servant,

"THOS GAINSBOROUGH.

"BATH, *Dec.* 5, 1768."

The "particular reason" mentioned was no doubt the invitation from Reynolds to join the Royal Academy, then in course of formation. In January, 1769, Wright of Derby was elected to the place among the Directors made vacant by the resignation of Gainsborough, who was nevertheless still regarded as a Fellow of the Society. Both he and Reynolds were formally expelled from it on the 6th of June, 1769, for breaking the rules by contributing to the first exhibition of the Royal Academy.

INDEX

ABDY, Captain, 179
Abel, Karl Friedrich, influence of his music on Gainsborough, 366; mentioned, 98, 114, 118, 120, 282, 360, 361, 362; *see also* Portraits
Academy, Royal, the, buys Gainsborough's letters to William Jackson, 57; foundation of, 65; first exhibition, 66; Diploma Gallery, 66, 295; Gainsborough's Diploma, 350; *Observations on the Pictures now Exhibiting at* (1771), 76; first exhibition at Somerset House, 166; *A Candid Review of the Exhibition*, 167; catalogues of 166–172; Winter Exhibitions (Old Masters), 36, 67, 185, 231, 265, 266, 267, 293, 328; miniatures at, 206; the "established line," 216, 217; proposed rival exhibition, 217; Gainsborough's portrait at, 295; he proposes to paint picture for Council Room, 295; attacked by Bate, 316; offers to buy Gainsborough's picture, 327; Gainsborough's penknife, 351; Ozias Humphry's manuscripts at, 390
Academy of Arts, St. Martin's Lane, 6, 7
Acton, 352, 353
Adair, Mr., 339
Adolphus, Prince, practical joke on Fischer, 164
Agnew & Sons, Messrs. Thomas, 77, 200, 255, 394
Agnew, Mr. Morland, 78
— Sir William, 132, 267
Ailesbury, Lord, 326
Aldborough, Earl of (Lord Baltinglass), 141
Alexander, Mr. W. C., 348
Allen, Ralph, 67
Althorp, 38, 199
Ancaster, Duke of, 273
Anderdon, J. H., Royal Academy catalogues, 40, 70
Angelo, Henry, 80, 128, 352, 364
Anstey, Christopher, 58
Anstruther, General, 365
— Sir Ralph, of Balcaskie, 365
Armstrong, Sir Walter, 32, 71, 78, 115, 251, 392
Art Journal, 283, 396
Art Union, 247, 312
Artists, Free Society of, 59, 115, 207
Artists, Incorporated Society of, Spring Gardens, 37, 43, 44, 59, 65; Gainsborough's letter of resignation from, 397
Artists' Repository, 206
Arts, the Society of, commissions Gainsborough to paint a portrait of Lord Folkestone, 124; mentioned, 105, 110, 125, 126, 289
Asphaltum, 246
Astley, John, and Schomberg House, 108, 149
Atholl, Duke of, 147
— Duchess of, 146
Augusta, Princess, 326; *see also* Portraits

BACH, John Christian, 98, 114, 117, 119, 120, 388
Bailey, William, 279
Baldrey, Andrew, 19
— Joshua Kirby, 20
Baltinglass, Lord; *see* Aldborough
Bampfylde, C. W., 358
Barry, James, R.A., 113, 216, 269
Bartolozzi, Francesco, R.A., 207, 309
Basset, Sir Francis, 241, 354
Bate, Rev. Henry (Sir Henry Bate Dudley), the champion of Gainsborough, 127; a founder of the *Morning Post*, his manner and appearance, 128; influence on newspapers, 129; the affray at Vauxhall, 131;

nicknamed "The Fighting Parson," 132; advertising the *Morning Post*, the Piccadilly procession, 133; founds the *Morning Herald*, 135; imprisoned for libel on the Duke of Richmond, 136; engages Mrs. Siddons for Garrick, 137; adopts the name of Dudley, 138; receives a baronetcy, 139; assists to quell riots at Ely, 139; dies at Cheltenham, 139; Gainsborough's portrait of him at the Academy of 1780, 168; attacked by the *London Courant* for supporting Gainsborough, 174; and by the *World*, 287; his country house at Bradwell, 288; "the most distinguished cultivator in Essex," 288; buys Gainsborough's pictures, 342; mentioned, 4, 5, 7, 76, 98, 113, 117, 127–140, 310, 361
Bate, Mrs. Henry (Lady Bate-Dudley), 130, 139; *see also* Portraits
Bath, 28–105; suicide at, 104; accident at the New Assembly Rooms, 79, 80; *Bath Chronicle*, 32, 35, 43, 79, 90, 91; Gainsborough's houses at, 31–36; Circus, The, 31–36, 48–50; *Bath Journal*, 33, 43, 90; *Historic Houses in Bath*, 31, 34; *New Bath Guide*, 58, 90; *Portraiture at*, 390–392
Bayham, Lord, 340
Bearing, Mr., 382, 383
Beattie, James, 49, 177
Beaumont, Sir George, 303; buys pictures at Gainsborough's sale, 324
Bedford, Duke of, 23, 34, 49; Gainsborough's letter to, 60; *see also* Portraits
Beechey, Sir William, R.A., 110, 343
Bell, Mr. R., 134
Belvoir, 332
Bentinck, Lord Charles, 156
Berghem, Nicholas, 300
Bernard, John, *Retrospection of the Stage*, 128
Betew, Mr. Panton, 27
Beverley, Earl of, 273
Bicknell Collection, the, 396
Bigg, W. R., R.A., 293
Birch, Thomas, *Lives of Illustrious Persons in Great Britain*, 6, 352
Bird, Mrs. (Elizabeth Gainsborough), 4
Birmingham Corporation Art Gallery, 159
Bone, Henry, R.A., 207
Books, Gainsborough's collection of, 352
Booth, Mr. W. H., 14
Boothby, Mr., 199
Bourgeois, Sir Francis, R.A. letter on Gainsborough, 89; 276, 277
Bowood, 272
Bowyer, Robert, takes Gainsborough's house in Pall Mall, 342
Boydell, Alderman, founds the Shakespeare Gallery, 269; buys the *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 297; 300, 333
Bradshaw, Mrs., 93
Bradwell, Essex, 288–290, 393
Briggs, H., 245, 246, 293, 353
British Artists, Society of, 283
British Institution, 242, 249, 264, 274, 300, 301, 362, 373
British Museum, 56, 66; letter by Gainsborough at, 358
Britton, John, 105
Broadwood, Messrs., & Co., sell harpsichord to Gainsborough, 107, 364
Brook Green, Hammersmith, 352
Broom, Rev. Mr., 25
Brown, Dr., 210, 393, 394
— Mr. Frank, 395
Bryan, Michael, 348
Buccleuch, Duchess of, 290
Buckingham, Marquis of, 231; *see also* Portraits
— House, 165, 177, 213, 250, 296, 330
Burke, Edmund, 117, 304, 309
Burnet, John, 376
Burney, Dr., 64, 192
— Fanny (Madame D'Arblay), 17, 57, 160, 163, 192, 201, 304
Burr, James, 9
— Margaret, *see* Gainsborough, Mrs.
— Mary, 9
Burrell, Sir Peter (Lord Gwydyr), buys *The Market Cart*, 273; sits to Gainsborough, 274; buys Gainsborough's Murillo, 328; mentioned, 193, 304, 323, 332, 354, 355
Burroughs, the Rev. Humphry, 4

Burton, John, copyist of Gainsborough, 316
— Lady, 128, 168, 290
Bute, Earl of, 72, 279
Buttall, Jonathan, attends Gainsborough's funeral, 309; owner of *The Blue Boy*, 372; sale of his pictures by Gainsborough and others, 377; property at Ipswich, 378; death of, 378; *see also* Portraits

Calonne, M. de, 186, 187
Cambridge, Duke of, 97, 164, 177
Campbell, Thomas, 136
Campbell's *Vitruvius*, 352
Carlini, Agostino, R.A., 217
Carlisle, Earl of, 116
— Countess of, 348
Carnarvon, Earl of, 292
Carysfort, Lord, 132
Cathcart, Lord, 146; *see also* Portraits
Chalmers, George, 393
Chamberlain, Mr. A. B., *Thomas Gainsborough*, 5
Chambers, Sir William, R.A., Gainsborough's letter to, 204; architect of Somerset House —his design criticised, 221; supports Gainsborough in the quarrel of 1784, 224; one of Gainsborough's pall-bearers, 309; *Treatise on Civil Architecture*, 352
Champione, travelling dealer in works of art, 91
Charlotte, Queen, 17, 115, 320, 326, 327, 344; *see also* Portraits
Charlton, Dr., of Bath, Thicknesse on, 46; attends Margaret Gainsborough, 79; his pictures by Gainsborough, 81, 82; *see also* Portraits
Chatham, Earl of (William Pitt the elder), his house in The Circus, 34, 49; his commissions to Bath artists, 36
Chatsworth, 42, 152
Chawner, T., his plan of Schomberg House, 111
Child, Mrs., 324
Cholmondeley, Lord, 155
Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich, 8, 13, 24
Christie, James, advertisements in Bath papers, 92; Gainsborough at his sale-rooms in Pall Mall, 112; robbed by highwaymen, 117; sells the pictures at Schomberg House, 341; sells Gainsborough's unfinished portraits and pictures, 346; and his prints, books, and lay figures, 351, 352; *see also* Portraits
Christie, Manson & Woods, Messrs., 97, 199, 202, 259, 273, 301, 314, 343, 394, 395
Cipriani, Giovanni, R.A., decorates Bach's concert-room, 114, 115, 221, 295
Claude, opinions of Reynolds and Gainsborough on his landscapes, 57, 276; engravings of his pictures in Gainsborough's collection, 351
Cleveland, Duke of, 40
Clive, Lord, 82
Clutterbuck, James, 55; Gainsborough gives him a copy of Garrick's portrait, 82
Cobbold, Mr. Felix, 13
Coke, Thomas William, of Norfolk (Lord Leicester) commissions Gainsborough to paint a portrait of the Prince of Wales, 235; his daughters Ann and Jane said to be pupils of Gainsborough, 268; *see also* Portraits
Collins, Samuel, introduces William Jackson to Gainsborough, 56; *see also* Portraits
— William, R.A., owns Gainsborough's painting-table, and a doll dressed by him, 231, 351
Colman, George, 52
Colour, criticisms of Gainsborough, 87, 143; his advice to Garrick and to Bourgeois, 88, 89
Colourmen, artists', of the eighteenth century, 92, 93, 248, 249, 254
Constable, John, R.A., 1; his letter to J. T. Smith on Gainsborough in Suffolk, 26; his uncle owns Gainsborough's *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 301
Copies, by Gainsborough, of Hudson, 124–5; of Velasquez, 249, 322; of Rubens, 282; of Vandyke, 249, 322; copies of Gainsborough's landscapes, 316
Copley, John Singleton, R.A., portrait of Major Montgomery and Fuseli's *Satan*, 169; 215; a witness in the Desenfans-Vandergucht trial, 280

Cornard, Great, 301
Cosmetic Artists, Society of, 89
Cosmetics, abuse of, in Gainsborough's time, 89, 90
Costume, importance of, in portraiture, 73–76, 391
Cosway, Richard, R.A., 108, 113; at the Desenfans-Vandergucht trial, 279
— Maria, 151
Cotes, Mr., 309
Cotterell, Mr. T. Sturge, 34
Cotton, William, *Sir Joshua Reynolds and his Works*, 8
Courtenay, Mr., *see* Henderson
Coventry, Countess of, a victim to cosmetics, 89
Coyte, Rev. Mr., 15
— Dr., his botanical garden at Ipswich, 16
Craighton, W., editor of the *Ipswich Journal*, shows Thicknesse Gainsborough's effigy of "Tom Peartree," 12; situation of his garden described, 13, 16
Croker, John Wilson, 394
Crosdill, Mr., the violoncellist, his picture of *Fox Dogs*, 362; *see also* Portraits
Cumberland, Henry Frederick, Duke of, at Sir Joshua's studio, 144; 163; *see also* Portraits
— Anne, Duchess of, a troublesome sitter to Wright of Derby, 101; 144; *see also* Portraits
— Richard, brings from Spain Gainsborough's Murillo, *St John in the Wilderness*, 275
Cunningham, Allan, 7, 13, 14, 39, 115, 116, 152, 216, 251, 304
Curtis, Ann, lectures at Dr. Graham's Temple of Health, 109
Cust, Mr. Lionel, his notes on Gainsborough's *Mrs. Robinson*, 183; on the Gainsboroughs in the Royal collections, 348
Cuyp, 300

D'Abernon of Esher, Lord, 314
Dalrymple, Grace (Mrs. Elliott, Madame St. Alban), her *Journal of My Life during the French Revolution*, 155; *see also* Portraits
Dance, George, R.A., 216, 217
— Nathaniel, R.A., supports Gainsborough in the first quarrel with the Academy, 95, 96; his discourteous treatment of the Society of Arts, 125; the envoy of the Academy to Gainsborough in 1777, 142; mentioned, 113, 115, 221, 260
Daniel, George, 66, 67
D'Arblay, Madame, *see* Burney, Fanny
Dartmouth, William, Earl of, 55; his letters from Gainsborough, 73–76
Dawson-Damer, Colonel, and the Prince of Wales's landscapes, 259
Delany, Mrs., *Autobiography and Correspondence*, 36
Delavoye, Colonel, *Life of Lord Lynedoch*, 147, 148
De Loutherbourg, P. J., R.A., 143, 207, 215, 286, 288, 369, 370
Denmark, King of, picture exhibition in honour of, 59
D'Eon, Madame, 302
Derrick, Samuel, Master of Ceremonies at Bath, 44, 52, 61
Derwent Water, 394
Desenfans, Noel, sells a Murillo to Gainsborough, 275; his action at law with Vandergucht, 276–281; offers four hundred guineas for *The Woodman*, 330; on Gainsborough and Mola, 396
Devonshire, Duke of, 41, 279
— Georgiana, Duchess of, sits to Gainsborough at Bath, when a child, 38; the supposed portrait of 1778, 150; Gainsborough urged to paint her, 151; story of his alleged failure and of the defacement of the portrait contradicted, 153; visits the Academy exhibition of 1783, 196; the "Stolen Duchess," 199; Hoppner's portrait of her by Gainsborough, 200; the "kissing" incident at the Westminster election, 221, 222; sits to Sir Joshua, 223; Gainsborough and Reynolds contrasted, 232; a frequent visitor to the Gainsborough exhibition at Schomberg House, 326; promises to sit to Gainsborough Dupont, 339
— men, superiority of, 385
Dewes, Mrs., 36
Dibdin, Charles, 63
Ditcher, Mrs., a daughter of Samuel Richardson, 160
— Miss, 160

Dixon, Mr. Samuel, Bath picture dealer, 91
Dodd, Dr., letter from Gainsborough to, 98; sentenced to death for forgery, 98; the wax-modeller's ingenious scheme to effect his escape from Newgate, 99
— Mrs., sends Mrs. Gainsborough a silk dress, 98
Dodsley, James, 58
Dogs, Gainsborough's, 10
Doll, dressed by Gainsborough, 231
Dorset, Duke of, his degradation of his Order of the Garter, 180, 244
Downman, John, A.R.A., quarrels with the Academy Council, 220
Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan, *Rodney Stone*, 241
Drapers' Hall, portrait at, 285
Drapery Painting, 71, 387
Dudley, Sir Henry Bate, *see* Bate, the Rev. Henry
Dulwich Gallery, 250, 277
Duncannon, Lord, 324
Dunning, John (Lord Ashburton), 384
Dunstanville, Lord de, *see* Sir Francis Basset
Duntze, Mr., 385
Dupont, Alfred, 336
— Gainsborough, highwaymen take his watch, 119; Gainsborough leaves him a hundred pounds and his painting materials, 311; apprenticed to his uncle, 336; student of the Royal Academy, 336; quarrels with Thicknesse, 337; alleged drunken habits, 338; finished Gainsborough's portrait of Pitt, 339; abandons engraving, 339; exhibits at the Academy, 340; resemblance of his work to that of his uncle, 340; unsuccessful candidature for the A.R.A., 342; commissions from the King, 343; his portraits at Trinity House, 343, 344; misunderstanding with the Academy about the portrait of the Princess of Wales, 344; painting the young Princesses at Windsor, 345; death of, 345; the sale of his property an excuse to dispose of the unfinished portraits by Gainsborough, 346; his uncle gives him *The Hay-maker and Sleeping Girl*, 349; a sketching tour with Gainsborough, 355; his pride, 388; mentioned, 71, 131, 162, 247, 309, 319, 378; description of his studio, 395; *see also* Portraits
Dupont, Mary, 336
— Richard, 345
— Mrs. (Sarah Gainsborough), 4
Duponts, the London silversmiths, 5
Dupuis, Colonel, 394
— Mrs., and Gainsborough's house at Ipswich, 23

Eagleton, Mr. J., 284
Eardley, Lord, *see* Gideon, Sir Sampson
Earwig, The, 175, 177
East Anglian Daily Times, 24
Edgeworth, Maria, 38
Edwards, Edward, A.R.A., *Anecdotes of Painters*, 7, 280, 372, 375
— Gerard Noel, *see* Noel
Eidophusikon, The, 369
Elizabeth, Princess, 326; *see also* Portraits
Ellis, Mr. Wynn, 199
Erskine, Mr., 393
European Magazine, The, its obituary of Gainsborough, 308, 309, 310; note on the origin of *The Blue Boy*, 374
Exhibition, The, A Candid Review of (1780), 167
— (1784), verses on, 224
The Exhibition at Spring Gardens, 46
Exton Park, Oakham, 273; Gainsborough's *Woodman* burnt at, 331

Falconer, Dr. Thomas, 32
— Dr. Wilbraham, and Gainsborough's house at Bath, 32
Farington, Joseph, R.A., 280
Fashion in dress, *see* Costume
Ferguson, Mr., "Limner in China ink," 16
Field, George, *Chromatography*, 246
Fielding, Sir John, 118
Fischer, John Christian, 86; secret correspondence with Mary Gainsborough, 122; their marriage, 162; appointed oboe-player in the Queen's band, 163; the victim of a royal practical joke, 164; sudden

death of, 165; on Mrs. Gainsborough, 312; *see also* Portraits
Fischer, Mrs. (Mary Gainsborough), 122, 123; marriage of, 162; Gainsborough's bequest and its conditions, 311; her trust fund, 312; at Brook Green and Acton, 352; insanity and death, 353; *see also* Portraits
Fisher, Kitty, 89
Fitzherbert, Mrs., and the Prince of Wales's landscapes, 259
Fitzpatrick, Colonel, a purchaser at Gainsborough's sale, 324
Flanders, Gainsborough's travels in, 281, 282
Flaxman, Mr., carver and gilder, 284
Flitch of Bacon, The, 130
Flond, Miss, of Bath, 385
Folkestone, Lord, 105, 124; *see also* Portraits
Fonnereau, Mr., early patron of Gainsborough, 8, 9
Foote, Samuel, 67
Forgeries of Gainsborough's work, 316, 333
Forster, John, divides a Gainsborough portrait with Macready, 27
Fox, Charles James, and "Perdita" Robinson, 182; connection of his election at Westminster with Gainsborough's quarrel with the Academy, 219–222; 223, 225
France, Louis XVI, King of, 272; portrait of Lord Lansdowne for, 272
Francis, Sir Philip, 12
Fraser, Mr. Alexander, 10
French Ambassador, the, 328
French Gallery, Pall Mall, 274
Frost, George, of Ipswich, owns Gainsborough's *The Mall, St. James's Park*, 26, 349, 394, 395
Fulcher, George Williams, *Life of Gainsborough* mentioned, 4, 14, 21, 22, 44, 45, 67, 69, 82, 104, 116, 167, 168, 171, 211, 231, 247, 264, 265, 273, 341, 349, 371
Fuseli, Henry, R.A., 70, 269; Bate's article on his election to the A.R.A., 316–318

GAINSBOROUGH, Ann, 3, 209
— Elizabeth, 2
— Emily, 2, 3
Gainsborough, Humphry, the Rev., 4, 104, 120, 121
— John, father of the painter, 2; postmaster at Sudbury, 4
— John, brother of the painter, "scheming Jack," 4; poverty of, 207; Thicknesse visits him, 208; meagre doles from his brother, 209
— John, junior, of Sudbury, 2
— Margaret (Margaret Burr), wife of the painter; her relatives in London and Scotland, 9; Angelo and Fischer on her character, 10; supposed daughter of a Duke of Bedford, 23; her mysterious annuity, 42; Gainsborough's opinion of her, 122; her savings and the value of her estate, 312; advised by Reynolds and West after the death of her husband, 314; sells Gainsborough's pictures at Schomberg House, 321, 341; attacked by Thicknesse, 337, 338; removes from Schomberg House, 342; sells Gainsborough's unfinished portraits and pictures at Christie's, 345; death of, 350; mentioned, 131, 275, 281, 315, 319, 329, 333, 335
— Margaret, elder daughter of the painter, presents a landscape and a portrait of Gainsborough to the Royal Academy, 66, 295; her illness at Bath, 79, 80; friction with her father, 122; gives annuity to her cousin Ann, 209; appointed joint executrix to her father, 310; value of his bequest to her, 312; inherits the family pictures, 350; sells Gainsborough's books and prints, 351; her acquaintance with Briggs, 353; dies at Acton, 353
— Mary, mother of the painter, 4
— Mary, younger daughter of the painter, *see* Fischer, Mary
— Matthias, 4
— Robert, 4
— Thomas, cousin of the painter, charitable bequests by, 3
— Thomas, boyhood at Sudbury, commences the *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 4; early life in London, he joins

the St. Martin's Lane Academy, 4–8; returns to Suffolk and finds a patron in Mr. Fonnereau, 8; marries Margaret Burr, 9; meets Philip Thicknesse, 12; the "Tom Peartree" effigy, 13–16; sells his furniture and pictures, 22; his house at Ipswich identified and described, 23–25; his work at Ipswich, 26, 27; removes to Bath, 28; theory of his previous stay in the city examined, 28, 29; his houses in Bath, 31–36; exhibits for the first time at Spring Gardens, and receives his first newspaper criticism, 37; his name first coupled with that of Reynolds, 38; friendship with Garrick, 38; Wiltshire the carrier and his grey horse, 40; character of, by Sir Uvedale Price, 41; his banking account with Messrs. Hoare, 42; death reported in the Bath papers, 43; elected a Fellow of the Incorporated Society of Artists, 44; takes a house in The Circus, 48; the quarrel with Underwood, 51–55; makes the acquaintance of William Jackson, 56; painting a picture for Garrick, 61; unfair comments by Theodore Hook on the correspondence of Gainsborough, 62; invited by Reynolds to join the Royal Academy, 65; Thicknesse's character sketch of Gainsborough in 1770, 71; his letters to Lord Dartmouth, 72–75; his opinions on costume in portraiture compared with those of Reynolds, 74–76; his friendship for Henderson, 84–86; Gainsborough's colouring criticised and compared with that of Reynolds, 86–89; his surroundings at Bath, 90–93; on the hanging of portraits, 95; suggested cause of the first quarrel with the Royal Academy, 95–97; decides to leave Bath, 99; the reason for his departure, 102; arrives in London, 106; takes Schomberg House, 107; elected a member of the Academy Council and votes at many elections, 113, 114; paints picture for Bach's concert-room, 114; early work in London, 115, 116; robbed by highwaymen, 117–120; domestic troubles, 122, 123; a commission from the Society of Arts, 125; reconciliation with the Academy, 142; the portrait of the Hon. Mrs. Graham, 146; the Duchess of Devonshire, 150–153; compared with Reynolds, 157; revisits Bath, 159; first attempt at sea-painting, 173; position at Court established, 177; obtains the patronage of the Prince of Wales, 178; Reynolds buys the *Girl with Pigs*, 186; subservient attitude towards sitters, 190, 191; at Windsor painting the Royal Family, 192; Reynolds sits to him, 193; letter to the Academy Council about the Royal portraits, 195; Lady Horatia Waldegrave's portrait in the fireplace, 205, 206; visits the Lakes with Kilderbee, 209; paints *The Mall, St. James's Park*, 211; quarrels with the Academy about the hanging of *The Eldest Princesses*, 213–220; his first exhibition at Schomberg House, 225–231; tries to adopt a beggar child, 232; another comparison with Reynolds, 232; paints Mrs. Siddons, 236; his palette, 245; brushes, 247; subdued light in studio, 248, 391, 392; copies a Velasquez, 249; his house at Richmond, 251, 252; visits Bath, 253; another exhibition at Schomberg House, 255–258; the Prince of Wales's landscapes, 258, 259; paints *The Market Cart*, 263; declines to paint for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, 269, 270; his prices for portraits, 275; buys a Murillo, 275; gives evidence in a trial about a disputed Poussin, 279; his travels in Flanders, 281; last surviving sitter, 286; the *Morning Herald*, "always puffed in," 288; exhibits at Liverpool, 294; improved relations with the Academy, 295; describes the painting of *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 298;

paints for Macklin's "Poets' Gallery," 302; illness, death, and funeral, 303–310; terms of his will, 310; last portrait and landscape by, 314; drawings by, 315; exhibition and sale of pictures at Schomberg House, 319; forgeries of his pictures, 333; second sale at Schomberg House, 341; sale at Christie's of unfinished portraits by, 345–47; sale of sketches, lay figures, books, and engravings, 350–352; visits Lulworth, 355; his influence on English landscape painting, 356–358; as a musician, 359–364; adventures when intoxicated, 366, 367; his conversational powers, 367, 368; meets Dr. Johnson, 368; his desire to paint Shakespearean subjects, 368; paints by candle light, 368, 390, 391; model theatre, 370; his personal appearance and manner, 371; love of modelling, 371; on composition in pictures, 379, 383; "sick of portraits," 385; comparison of music and painting, 387; life at Bath, 390; expelled from the Incorporated Society of Artists, 397

Letters from Gainsborough, quoted or mentioned

To a correspondent in Colchester, 20, 21; to Lord Royston, 41; to Samuel Kilderbee, 58; to Dodsley, 58, 59; to the Duke of Bedford, 60; to Garrick, 61, 63, 64, 83, 88, 94, 95; to Henderson, 38, 85, 86; to Lord Dartmouth, 72–75; to Dr Dodd, 98; to Philip Thicknesse, 104; to the Hon. Thomas Stratford, 116, 141; to Mrs. Gibbon, 121, 122, 124, 162; to the Society of Arts, 125; to the Royal Academy, 142, 195, 213, 216; to Mrs. Ditcher, 159; to Sir Joshua Reynolds, 186, 307; to F. M. Newton, R.A., 195; to Sir William Chambers, R.A., 204; to Mrs. Dupont, 207–209; to J. K. Sherwin, 306; to Henry Bate, 282, 298; about his illness, 304; about the engraving of his portrait, 305; to Ozias Humphry, R.A., 316; to Lord Hardwicke, 358; to William Jackson, 57, 379–389; to William Pearce, 210, 393; to Joshua Kirby, 397

Pictures by Gainsborough mentioned

Landscapes: *Landguard Fort*, 26; a landscape with sheep, the first admitted to a collection, 43, 358; *The Harvest Waggon*, 40; *Landskip and Figures*, 50; *Romantic Landscape with Sheep at a Fountain*, 66, 295; *The Woodman going out before Sunrise* and *A Landscape and Cattle*, 81; *The Cottage Door*, 94, 170; Sea-pieces, 173, 176, 204; *The Woodcutter's Home*, 185, 186; *A Woody Landscape with Packhorses resting by a Cottage*, 255; *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 4, 296–302; group of seven small landscapes, 255, 256; *The Woodman* (Mistley Hall), 235; landscapes purchased by the Prince of Wales, 229, 258, 259, 322, 325, 332; *Landscape with Figures and Pigs*, 262; *Landscape with a Cottage and Figures*, 324; *Landscape with Cows and Horses* and *Landscape with Sheep and Figures*, 325; *The Market Cart*, 263, 270, 273–275, 323–332, 356; *A Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door*, 323, 324, 342, 356; *Landscape with Buildings*, 342; Landscapes mentioned, 38, 56, 69, 77, 94, 143, 145, 157, 158, 169, 170, 195, 204, 207, 293, 305, 322, 324, 325, 332, 345, 346, 350, 358

Portraits mentioned

Abel, Karl Friedrich, 143, 145, 347, 363; Abingdon, Earl of, 346, 347; Argyll, fourth Duke of, 50; Argyll, fifth Duke of, 159; Augusta, Princess, 197; Aylesford, Countess of, and child, 346, 347; Bacelli, Madame, 180, 184, 185, 188, 244; Baillie, Family, the, 213; Basset, Lady, *see* "Dunstanville, Lady de"; Bate,

the Rev. Henry (Sir Henry Bate-Dudley), 140, 168; Beaufoy, Mrs., 167; Beaufoy, Mr., 234; Bedford, Duke of, 346, 347; Berkeley, Captain G., 225, 227, 257; Berkeley, Lady, 347; Bouverie, the Hon. Edward, 105; Brun, Madame le, 167; Buckingham, Marquis of, 290, 306; Buckinghamshire, Earl of, 213, 228, 230; Buckinghamshire, Countess of, 213, 228, 230; Burrell, Lady Priscilla, 193; Burrell, Sir Peter (Lord Gwydyr), 274; Buttall, Jonathan (*The Blue Boy*), 70, 372–378; Camden, Lord, 185, 187, 266; Campbell, Lord Frederick, 257; Cathcart, Lord, 228, 231; Champain, Marquis, 346; Charlton, Dr., 45, 82; Charlotte, Queen, 173, 174, 176, 177; Chesterfield, Philip Stanhope, Earl of, 156; Chesterfield, Countess of, 157; Christie, James, 112, 156; Clarges, Lady, 347; Clive, Lady, 271, 346, 347; Coke, Thomas William (Earl of Leicester), 267; Collins, Samuel, 56; Conway, General, 167; Cornwall, Sir Wolfran, 237, 257; Cornwallis, Marquis, 194, 195; Coyte, Mr. George, 167; Crofts, Mrs., 228; Crosdill, Mr., 167; Cumberland, Duke of, 143, 210, 227, 346, 348; Cumberland, Duchess of, 143, 159, 210, 227, 346, 348; Cumberland, Duke and Duchess of, and Lady Elizabeth Luttrell, 322, 327; Dalrymple, Grace (Mrs. Elliott, Madame St. Alban), 154, 155, 156, 185, 188, 243, 244; Darnley, Lord, 238, 239; Dartmouth, Countess of, 55, 73–75, 190; De Loutherbourg, P. J., 157; Devonshire, Duchess of (*see* Spencer, Georgiana), 150–153, 195, 196–200; Ditcher, Mr. Philip, 159; Dixon, Mrs., 228; Dodd, Dr., 98; Dorset, Duke of, 180; Douglas, Lord and Lady, 73; Douglas, Mrs., 228, 231; Dudley, Sir Henry Bate, *see* Bate, Rev. Henry; Dudley, Lady Bate, 290; Dunstanville, Lady de, 265; Dupont, Gainsborough, 314; Eardley, Lady, and her daughter, 70; Eardley, Lady, and child, 346; Elizabeth, Princess, 197; Elliott, Mrs., *see* Dalrymple, Grace; Ellis, Mrs. Welbore (Lady Mendip), 294; Essex, Earl of, *see* Malden, Lord; Fagniani, Maria ("Mie Mie"), 116; Fane, Mrs., 185, 257; Fischer, John Christian, 167; Fisher, Mrs., 228; Folkestone, Lord, 124–126, 290; Ford, Miss, *see* Thicknesse, Mrs. P.; Franco, Mrs., 266; Gage, Lord, 143; Gainsborough, Mrs., 10; Gainsborough, Margaret and Mary, 27; Gainsborough, Thomas, 268, 295, 310; Garrick, David, 44, 67–70, 82, 83, 94; George the Third, 115, 116, 173, 176, 177, 196, 197, 212; Gloucester, Duke of, 116, 346, 347; Gloucester, Duchess of (Countess Waldegrave), 96, 97, 116, 159, 346, 347; Gossett, Isaac, 167; Gould, Sir Charles, 195, 198; Graham, the Hon. Mrs. Thomas, 146–149; Graves, Admiral, Lord, 244, 257; Grosvenor, Lady, 50; Gwydyr, Lady, *see* Burrell, Lady Priscilla; Gwydyr, Lord, *see* Burrell, Sir Peter; Hallet, Mr. and Mrs. (*The Morning Walk*), 258; Hamilton, Lord Archibald, 266, 267; Hamilton, Lord Alexander, 266, 267; Hanham, Lady, 346; Harbord, Sir Harbord (Lord Suffield), 195, 203; Harrington, Lord, 228, 257; Haywood, Clara, 154; Henderson, John, 86, 142, 167; Hervey, Captain (Lord Bristol), 59; Hibbert, Mrs., 266; Hingeston Family, 27; Honywood, General, 44; Hood, Lord, 213, 225, 228, 244; Hopetoun, Lady, 271; Howard, Mr., 228, 303; Howard, Mrs., 346, 347; Hurd, Bishop, 173, 174, 177; Ibbetson, Mrs., 347; Impey, Lady, 259; Ipswich Musical Club, Portrait Group of members, 22; Jersey, Earl of, 346, 347; Kirby, Joshua, 43; Knapp, Jerome, 283–285; Langston, Mr., 290; Lansdowne, Marquis of (Lord Shelburne),

271, 272; Leicester, Earl of, *see* Coke, Thomas William; Ligonier, Lord, 77; Ligonier, Lady, 77; Linley, Thomas, junior, 383; Linley, Eliza, *see* Sheridan, Mrs.; Littleton, Lady, 347; Loundes, Mr., 228; Lucy, Mr., 36; Luttrell, Lady Elizabeth, 327; Malden, Lord (Earl of Essex), 243; Mansfield, Louisa, Countess of, *see* Stormont, Lady; Marsham Family, the, 286; Maynard, Lady, 347; Medlicott, Mr., 38; Mendip, Lady, *see* Ellis, Welbore; Merlin, Mr., 185, 191, 192; Methuen, Mrs., 347; Methuen, Mr., 228; Minet, Mr., 157; Minet, Mrs., 157; Molyneux, Lady, 66; Montagu, Duke of, 62, 290; Montagu, Duchess of, 62; Moysey, Abel, 80; Moysey Family, the, 79; Mulgrave, Lord, 244, 253; Needham, Captain, 59; Nicholls, Master (*The Pink Boy*), 185, 191, 192; Norfolk, Duke of (Earl of Surrey), 227, 231, 259, 265, 303; Northumberland, Duke of, 195, 244; Nugent, Colonel, 44; Nugent, Mr., 37; Nuthall, Mr., 77; Orpin, Edward, 40; Oswald, Mrs., 346; Paul, Sir Onesiphorus, 43; Paul, Lady, 43; Peer, a (purple-faced) and Peeress, 87; Perryn, Baron, 159; Petre, Lady, 302, 303; Pitt, George, 66; Pitt, William, 271, 290; Powis, Lord, 347; Poyntz, William, 37, 38; Princesses, the Eldest, 115, 197, 212, 213, 215, 216, 224, 226, 230, 258, 261, 266, 316, 349; Pujet, Mrs., 294; Quin, James, 38–40, 347, 348, 391; Radnor, Earl of, 105; Ramus, The Sisters (?), 159; Ray, Martha, 195; Rawdon, Lord, *see* Hastings, Marquis of; Robinson, Mrs. (Perdita), 178, 180–184; Rodney, Lord, 211, 213, 227, 231, 234, 257, 266; Royal Family, the (group of fifteen portraits), 192, 195, 196, 197, 258; Royal, the Princess, 197, 213; Rutland, Mary Isabella, Duchess of, 193; St. Alban, Madame, *see* Dalrymple, Grace; St. Leger, Colonel John, 179, 185, 188, 189, 190; Sandwich, Lord, 194, 195, 203, 306; Savoi, Signor, 347; Schomberg, Dr., 81; Sheridan, Mrs. (Eliza Linley), 195, 198, 200, 202, 238, 239, 257, 260, 265, 383; Sheffield, Lady, 238, 257; Shelburne, Lord, *see* Lansdowne, Marquis of; Siddons, Mrs., 69, 76, 211, 234, 236, 239, 257; Skinner, Baron, 250, 257; Sloper Family, the, 290; Smith, Mr. John, 285; Sparrowe, John, 11; Spencer, Georgiana (Duchess of Devonshire), 38; S–t–d, Mrs., 91; Stevens, the Rev. William, 167; Stopford, Lord, 228, 347; Stormont, Lady, 193; Suffield, Lord, *see* Harbord, Sir Harbord; Surrey, Earl of, *see* Norfolk, Duke of; Sussex, Lady, and child, 77; Sykes, Sir Francis, 283; Tarleton, Colonel, 179, 184, 185, 190, 191; Thicknesse, Mrs. Philip (Miss Ford), 36, 99, 103; Tomkinson Boys, the, 213; Vane, Mrs. 228; Vernon, Admiral, 12, 27; Vernon, Mr., 50; Villiers, Lord, 28; Wade, Captain, 77, 78; Wade, Mr., of Brighton, 346; Waldegrave, Countess, *see* Gloucester, Duchess of; Waldegrave, Lady Horatia, 97, 198, 205, 207, 295; Wales, Prince of, 178, 179, 185, 188, 189, 190, 197, 211, 225, 232, 235, 253, 256, 282; Warren Dr., 228; Watson, Mrs., 257; Whichcote, Sir Christopher, 347; William Henry, Prince (William the Fourth), 177; Willes, Mr. Justice, 266; Winchelsea, "Old," 43; Wise, Mr., 36; Wise, Mrs., 157; Wycombe, Lord, 273

Miscellaneous Works and Drawings

Assumption of the Virgin, 348; *Beggar Boys*, 238, 322, 326; *Beggars, The*, 228, 294; *Blue Boy, The*, see Portraits, "Buttall, Jonathan"; *Boy with a Cat, The*, 293, 322, 324, 329; *Boy at Cottage Fire and Girl eating Milk*, 322, 324, 329; *Cart Horse, The Old*, 350; *Comic Dancing*, 363; *Comic Muse, A*, 114; *Cottage Children with the*

Ass, 250, 251, 265, 273, 332; *Cottage Children*, see *Wood Gatherers, The*; *Cottage Girl, The*, 179; *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*, 234, 241, 242, 243, 250, 266, 292; *Diana and Actæon*, 348; *Fisher Boy, The*, 332; *Fox Dogs*, 362; *Fox Hunt, A*, 328; *Girls with a Donkey*, see *Cottage Children with the Ass*; *Girl with Milk*, 263, 264, 294; *Girl Gathering Mushrooms*, 348; *Girl with Pigs*, 185, 186, 187, 193, 242, 261, 277; *Girl going to the Well*, see *Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher*; *Haymaker and Sleeping Girl, The*, 349; *Housemaid, The*, 348; *Jack Hill in his Cottage*, 293; *Lavinia*, 264, 302; *Mall, St. James's Park, The*, 26, 211, 226, 229, 250, 322, 329, 342, 348, 349, 394, 395; proposed companion picture to, 250; *Mushroom Gatherer, The*, see *Girl Gathering Mushrooms*; *Musidora Bathing her Feet*, 109, 348; *Nymph at the Bath, A*, see *Musidora*; *Park, The*, see *Mall, The*; *Peasant Girl with Sticks, The*, 179; *Representation of St. James's Park with drest Figures*, see *Mall, The*; *Rural Lovers, The*, 27; *Rustic Amusement*, see *Cottage Children with the Ass*; *Shepherd, A*, 173, 174, 177, 179, 238, 241, 326; *Two Shepherd Boys with Fighting Dogs*, 195, 204, 262; *Tom Peartree*, 8, 12–16; *View in St. James's Park, A*, 348 (see *Mall, The*); *Woodman, The*, 235, 285, 296, 322, 323, 329, 331, 332, 371; *Wood Gatherers, The*, 242, 291, 292, 294; *Young Hobbinol and Gandaretta*, 302

Drawings

A Book of Drawings (1770), 69; at National Gallery, 299; forgeries of, 315, 316; Gainsborough's gifts of, 320, 388; in coloured chalks, 320, 327; sketch books, 351

Gainsborough, Henry Noel, Earl of, buys *The Woodman*, 323, 330, 331; 354
Gandon, James, 18
Gardiner, Mrs. (Susannah Gainsborough), 4
Gardner, Daniel, 221
Garrick, David, Gainsborough on, 38, 86; letters by, 38, 136, 137; Stratford, portrait of, 67–69; correspondence with, 61–64, 83, 88, 94; death of, 157; mentioned, 18, 41, 52, 81, 112, 128, 129, 132, 189, 368; *see also* Portraits
— Mrs., 82, 83, 94, 95
Gautier, Théophile, on *The Morning Walk*, 258
Gazetteer, The, 143, 167, 205, 299
General Advertiser, The, 146, 240
General Evening Post, The, 155, 156, 310
General Magazine, The, 313, 340
Gentleman's Magazine, The, 69, 93, 104, 308, 393, 395
George the Third, King, 211, 252, 296, 323, 343, 344; *see also* Portraits
George the Fourth, 393
Giardini, Felice de, buys harpsichord for Gainsborough at Broadwood's, 107; mentioned, 17, 55, 64, 86, 235, 359–361, 384
Gibbon, Mrs. (Mary Gainsborough), 4, 11, 120, 121, 162, 208, 338
Gibbs, James, *Architecture*, 352
Gideon, Sir Sampson (Lord Eardley) and the Prince of Wales, 70
Gloucester, Duchess of, 327; *see also* Portraits
Gossett, Isaac, wax-modeller, 168, 309; *see also* Portraits
— Rev. Isaac, 167
Gower, Mr. F. C., of Ipswich, 24
— Lord, 325
— Lord Ronald, 170, 230, 325
Grafton, Duke of, 60
— Galleries, London, 179, 249
Graham, Dr., 108
— Mr. John Murray, 147
— Mr. Robert, of Redgorton, 149
— Thomas (Lord Lynedoch), 147–149
— the Hon. Mrs. Thomas, 231, 348; *see also* Portraits
Grantham, Lord, 249
Gravelot, Hubert, 5
Graves, Mr. Algernon, 45, 146, 157
— The Rev. Richard, lines addressed to Gainsborough at Bath, 47

Gray, Thomas, 170, 210, 393
Green, Thomas, of Ipswich, 22, 23, 394
Greenwich Hospital, 194
Greenwood, John, artist and auctioneer, 297, 334, 346
Grenville, Mr., 271, 340
Grignion, Charles, 6
Grosvenor, Earl, 94, 373
— Gallery, 67, 133, 157, 265, 293, 370, 393
— Lady, 144; *see also* Portraits
— Sir Richard, 144
Guildhall, exhibition at, 185
Gwydyr, Lord, *see* Burrell, Sir Peter

HABERDASHERS' Company, the, 283, 284
Haddy, Mr., 60
Halswelle, wreck of the, 253
Hamilton, Colonel James, 320; Gainsborough gives him *The Boy at the Stile*, 365
— Duke of, 266, 273
— Lady, 108, 109
— Sir William, 139
— William, R.A., 269, 318
Hampstead, 251
Handbook for Young Painters, The, 242, 377
Handel, George Frederick, 64, 282
Hanover Square, 363, 383
Harcourt, Lord, 28
Harcourt Papers, The, 29
Hardinge, Mr. George, buys pictures at Gainsborough's sale, 324
Hardwicke, Earl of, 41, 42, 358, 359
Harley, Alderman, 266
Harris, Thomas, collection of theatrical portraits, 343, 395
Harris Letters, The, 114
Hartley, Mrs., 132
Harwich, the salt water baths at, 21
Hastings, Warren, trial of, 303, 304; Dupont's portrait of, 395
Hayley, William, lines on Gainsborough, 263
Hayman, Francis, R.A., 6, 7, 373
Hazlitt, William, 242; *Conversations of James Northcote*, 251, 275; 292
Heberden, Dr., 304
Henderson, John, 38, 84–86; *see also* Portraits
Herkomer, Sir Hubert von, R.A., 344
Hertford, third Marquis of, 116, 183
Highwaymen, rob Gainsborough and his nephew, 117–119; attack Thomas Graham, 147
Hill, Jack, model of Gainsborough's, 292, 293
— Mr., restores pictures at Exton Park, 331
Historical Manuscripts Commission, 72, 107
Hoare, Messrs. Charles, & Co., bankers, 42
— Henry, "Banker at Temple Bar," 41; buys landscape from Gainsborough, 43, 358
— Lady, buys picture at Gainsborough's sale, 294, 324
— Prince, sculptor, 36
— Prince, 357, 358
— Sir Richard Colt, 358
— William, R.A., 36, 107
Hobbema, 300
Hodges, William, R.A., 280
Hogarth, William, his connection with Joshua Kirby, 18; 54, 189
Holdernesse, Lord, sells Schomberg House, 108
Holkham, Gainsborough at, 268, 283
Holl, Frank, R.A., 344
Holman, the actor, 396
Hone, Nathaniel, R.A., 113
Hook, Theodore, unfair criticisms of Gainsborough's letters, 62, 63
Hoppner, John, R.A., his portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire by Gainsborough, 200; art critic to the *Morning Post*, 223; buys Gainsborough's lute, 352; mentioned, 73, 99, 232, 233, 336, 343, 357
Hotham, Baron, 118
Houbraken, 6
Howe, Lord, 343, 344
Huddart, Captain, F.R.S., 343
Hudson, Thomas, jealousy of Gainsborough, 38, 39; 124, 125, 333
Humphrey Clinker, 48, 85
Humphry, Ozias, R.A., 46, 56, 316; his notes on Gainsborough at Bath, 390–392
Hunt, Mr. John, Town Clerk of Westminster, 107
Hunter, John, surgeon, 304, 309
Huntingdon, Mr. H. E., collection of pictures in America, 302
Hutchins, Boulton, & Philips, Messrs., 183

INDIGO, 246, 383, 386
Ipswich, Christchurch Mansion, 8, 13, 24; eighteenth century, 11; the *Ipswich Journal*, 12, 13, 16, 21, 22, 25; the Musical Club at, 22; Gainsborough's house at, 21–25; Pennington's plan of, 23; Shire Hall, the, 22
Ireland, John, 86, 142
Ironmongers' Hall, Lord Hood's portrait at, 225
Italian Landscape, Gainsborough's sketches of, 351
Italy, not visited by Gainsborough, 351, 396

JACKMAN, Isaac, Editor of the *Morning Post*, 136
Jackson, John, R.A., 27, 371
— Stephen, of the *Ipswich Journal*, 13
— Thomas, 57
— William, of Exeter, his concert at Bath, 55; introduced to Gainsborough, 56; portraits of, 56; on Gainsborough as a musician, 57, 359–364; Gainsborough's letters on his behalf to the Duke of Bedford, 60; Gainsborough's letters to him, 57, 379–389; on *The Blue Boy*, 372; mentioned, 50, 59, 104, 123, 200, 201, 231, 246, 282, 306, 315, 331, 359
Jameson, Anna, on the *Mrs. Siddons*, 237; 376
Jaye, musical instrument maker, 385
Jersey, William, Earl of, 29
Johnson, Dr. Samuel, 37, 72, 128, 176, 195, 220; his acquaintance with Gainsborough, 368
Jones, William, fruit-painter, of Bath, 92

KAUFFMAN, Angelica, R.A., 207
Keate, Mr., 95
Keenan, J., portrait of Jackson of Exeter, 56
Kemble, Fanny, on the *Mrs. Siddons*, 236
Kew, Gainsborough buried at, 309; his grave, 313; church registers stolen, 353
Kew Green, 210, 251
Kilderbee, Samuel, of Ipswich, 23; Gainsborough's letters to, 58, 124; visits the Lakes with Gainsborough, 210, 325, 393; at Gainsborough's death-bed, 306; acts as "overseer" of his will, 310; sale of his pictures, 349, 394, 395
Kilderbee, S. H., 395
Kirby, Joshua, his high character, 17; Hogarth encourages him to paint, 18; leaves Ipswich, 19; the King and his book on perspective, 37; his landscape said to have been painted by the King, 51; elected President of the Incorporated Society of Artists, 65; the first to call the King's attention to Gainsborough, 115; mentioned, 113, 245, 309, 352, 397; *see also* Portraits
— William, pupil of Gainsborough, 19
— William, M.A., 18
Kneller, Sir Godfrey, 21
Knight, Mr., buys landscapes at Gainsborough's sale, 324
Knoedler & Co., Messrs., 177
Knole, 180, 200

LADE, Sir John and Lady, 241
Lakes, the, 209, 210, 287, 325, 393
Landscape painting, influence of Gainsborough on, 356, 357
Landscapes, *see* Gainsborough, Thomas.
Landseer, Sir Edwin, R.A., 230
Lane, Mrs. Sophia, on Gainsborough's boyhood, 5; mentioned, 304, 314, 335, 351, 353
— Edward William, 5
— Richard James, A.R.A., 5, 351
— the Misses, gift of pictures to the National Gallery, 350
Lawrence, Sir Thomas, P.R.A., 236; on *The Blue Boy*, 377
Lay figures, sale of Gainsborough's, 351
Le Brun, Madame Vigée, 280
Leggatt Brothers, Messrs., 13
Leicester, Sir John; *see* Tabley, Lord de
Leighton, Lord, 394
Leslie, Charles Robert, R.A., 128, 186, 242, 351, 371, 377
— G. D., R.A., 120, 351
Library of the Fine Arts, The, 112
Liesching, Mr. H. S., of Trinity House, 344
Linley, Eliza (Mrs. R. B. Sheridan), *see also* Portraits
— Family, the, 55, 390

Linley, Thomas, 129, 200, 309, 390
— Thomas, junior, 200, 383, 390
Liverpool, Gainsborough exhibits at, 294
London Chronicle, 51, 146
London Courant, 169, 174, 175, 188
Lowe, Mauritius, and *The Earwig*, 176
Lucas, Lord, 249
Luck, Mr., 393
Lulworth Castle, Gainsborough visits, 355
Lynedoch, Lord, *see* Graham, Thomas.
Lysons, Daniel, *Environs of London*, 251
Lyttleton, Lord, 133

"M.M.," 189; anecdote of Gainsborough and Abel, 366
Macklin, Thomas, 264; gives commissions to Gainsborough, 293; his "Poets' Gallery," 302
Macready, W. C., divides a Gainsborough portrait with John Forster, 27
Mair, Major, sells the *Mrs. Siddons* to the National Gallery, 236
Malton, T., 352
Marlborough, Duchess of, and Gainsborough's drawings, 320
Marlow, William, 221
Mason, the Rev. William, 176
Melbourne, Lord, 108
Mendoza, D., 365
Merlin, Joseph, 192; *see also* Portraits
Meyer, Jeremiah, R.A., 113, 260, 309
Michael Angelo, Gainsborough's supposed pictures by, 321
Michel, the engraver, 287
Middlesex Journal, 87
Middleton, W., artists' colourman, 249
— Park, 29
Miller, Mr., 254
Mitchell, Mr. Henry, 353
Modelling, 8, 371
Mola, P. F., Gainsborough's admiration for, 396
Mond, Dr. Ludwig, and Gainsborough's Murillo, 328
— Mrs. Ludwig, 328
Monthly Ledger, The, 394
Monthly Magazine, The, 370
Monthly Mirror, The, 360, 366
More, Hannah, 180, 182
Morgan, John Pierpont, 200
Morland, George, 56; supposed collaboration with Gainsborough, 140
Morning Chronicle, The, 6, 7, 8, 15, 116, 143, 146, 154, 156, 170, 196, 247, 260, 292, 308
Morning Herald, The, founded by Henry Bate, 135; the successful rival of the *Morning Post*, 136; attacked for its support of Gainsborough, 174, 286–288; mentioned, 111, 128, 129, 131, 133, 134, 138, 140, 151, 153, 158, 164, 172, 173, 190, 192, 201, 205, 211, 213, 223–226, 234, 239, 243, 245, 248, 261, 269, 274, 275, 290, 293, 299, 315, 316, 320, 323, 326, 328, 333, 336, 338, 341, 362
Morning Post, The, foundation of, 128; the Drury Lane advertisements, 129; quarrels among the proprietors and foundation of the *New Morning Post*, 134; libel on the Duke of Richmond, 135; the editor fined and imprisoned for libelling the editor of the *Morning Herald*, 136; severity of its earlier art criticisms and successful protest by artists, 138; first review of Gainsborough's pictures, 144; amusing error in criticism of Gainsborough, 203; engages John Hoppner and other artists as critics, 223; mentioned, 131–136, 145, 146, 157, 158, 168, 169, 172, 183, 198, 215, 217, 232, 239, 260, 308, 315, 333, 357
Morning Post, The New, 133–135
Morris, William, 2
Morrison, Richard, sells the *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 297
Moser, Mary, R.A., 70, 373
Moysey, Dr., of Bath, 42, 79, 80, 388
— Abel, 80
Mulgrave, Lord, 320; *see also* Portraits
Murillo, Gainsborough buys his *St. John*, 275, 321, 328
Music and Gainsborough, 359–366, 390

National Gallery, The, 27, 40, 106, 109, 132, 140, 168, 213, 234, 236, 257, 274, 292, 294, 296, 299, 301, 323, 328, 348, 350

National Loan Exhibition, *The Cottage Girl*, 179
— Portrait Gallery, *Admiral Vernon*, 27; *Charles, Marquess Cornwallis*, 194
Neeld, Sir Audley, 394
Newcastle, Henry, Duke of, buys the *Two Beggar Boys*, 326
Newman, Mr., artists' colourman, 248
Newton, F. M., R.A., 195, 216, 217
Noel, Gerard Noel, Mr., his pictures burnt at Exton Park, 331
Nollekens, Joseph, R.A., 50, 364
Norman, Barak, 385
North, Lord, 74, 117
Northcote, James, R.A., 114, 193, 237, 250, 254, 269, 371
Northumberland, Duke of, 273; *see also* Portraits
Notes and Queries, 364

O'Kebfe, John, 395
Opera House, the, Gainsborough's painted figures at, 363
Opie, John, R.A., 56, 254
Orleans, Duke of, proposed portrait of by Gainsborough, 253, 262
Orlebar, Eliza, visits Gainsborough's studio at Bath, 107
Ossory, Lady, Walpole's letter to, 133
Otway, Thomas, 146

Painting-table, Gainsborough's, 231
Palliser, Admiral, Sir Hugh, trial of, 158, 194
Palmer, John, of Bath, letter to Garrick about Gainsborough, 79, 379, 380, 382, 386, 387, 388
— John, junior, 339, 340
Paper, drawing, 58, 388
Parke, W. T., *Musical Memoirs* by, 123, 130, 164, 187, 364
Pasquin, Anthony (John Williams), 7, 89, 247, 248
Passavant, M., *Tour of a German Artist in England*, 376
Peach, R. E. M., 31, 32, 34, 35
Pearce, William, 210, 251, 392–394
"Peartree, Tom," 8, 12–16, 24, 152
Penmanship, Gainsborough's admiration for, 371
Peters, Matthew William, R.A., 46, 216, 217
Peterborough, Hinchliffe, Dr., Bishop of, 278
Phillips, Sir George, anecdote of *The Girl with Milk*, 264
Piccadilly, the *Morning Post* procession in, 133
Picture-dealers and *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 299; French, 280; near Hanover Square, 383
Pierce, Captain, of the *Halswelle*, 254
Pindar, Peter, on Gainsborough's portraits of the Royal Family, 197
Pine, Robert Edge, 189
— Simon, 54
Piozzi, Mrs., *Letters and Literary Remains*, 271
Pitt, William, the elder; *see* Chatham, Earl of
— William, painted by Gainsborough, 271, 290; another portrait finished by Dupont, 338; sits to Dupont for portrait, 339; 340, 343, 344, 395
Porchester, Lord, buys *The Wood Gatherers*, 291; 292, 294
Portfolio, The, 10
Portland, Duke of, 156
Portraits, Gainsborough on the hanging of, 95
Portraiture, Gainsborough's methods in, 391, 392; importance of costume in, 73–76, 391
Potter, Paul, 300
Poussin, Nicolas, 276–281
Powell, Mr. J. Rubens, 393
Poynter, Sir Edward, P.R.A., 24
Prestel, Mary C., 299
Pretender, The Young, 2
Price, Sir Uvedale, character of Gainsborough, 41
Prince Regent, the, 139
Princess Royal, the, 326, 327; *see also* Portraits
Prints, sale of Gainsborough's collection, 351
Pritchard, Mrs., 63
Public Advertiser, The, new departure in journalism, 44; mentioned, 68, 96, 143, 171, 172, 180, 188, 198, 239, 240, 260
Pyne, W. H., 2, 6

Quarterly Review, The, Hoppner's article in, 233
Queensberry, Duke of, 73
Quick, John, 395
Quin, James, 38–42

RADNOR, William, Earl of, 105, 124, 125; *see also* Portraits
— Helen Matilda, Countess of, 105
Raeburn, Sir Henry, R.A., 249
Ramsay, Allan, 72, 231, 344
Ranelagh, 117
Raphoe, Bishop of, 294
Rasse, Elizabeth, 22, 25
— Thomas, 25
Redgrave, Richard, R.A., 192
Reeves & Son, Messrs., 254
Refreshments, bill for, in 1752, 3
Repository of Arts, The, 356
Reynolds, Sir Joshua, P.R.A., on Gainsborough as a self-taught artist, 7, 8; early connection of his name with that of Gainsborough, 38, 46; opinion of Claude, 57; invites Gainsborough to join the Royal Academy, 65; on costume in portraiture, 76; Gainsborough's rivalry with, 143, 157, 174, 184, 202; buys the *Girl with Pigs*; his letter of compliments to Gainsborough, 186; sits to Gainsborough, 193; his work criticised as Gainsborough's, 204; the Prince of Wales solicits his vote for Fox, 219, 220; a comparison with Gainsborough, 232, 233; on Gainsborough as a copyist, 249; visits Gainsborough on his deathbed, 306–7; assists Mrs. Gainsborough with his advice, 314; reproved by Richard Wilson, 370; the alleged origin of *The Blue Boy*, 375–377; expelled from the Incorporated Society of Artists, 397; mentioned, 37, 45, 70, 73, 80, 95–97, 101, 102, 106, 115, 124, 132, 142, 144, 158, 166, 180, 183, 206, 214–216, 223, 224, 235–237, 240–245, 251, 261, 262, 269, 272–280, 301, 304, 316–318, 344, 346, 351
Richards, John Inigo, R.A., 217
Richmond, 250, 251
Richmond, Duke of, 135, 136
— George, R.A., 314
— Sir W. B., R.A., 314
Riddell, Buchanan-, Lady, Gainsborough's last surviving sitter, 286
Rigby, Richard, of Mistley, 235
Rimbault, E. F., 364
— Stephen Francis, 364
Robins, Mr., a Bath landscape painter, 91
Robinson, Mr., auctioneer, 140
Robinson, Mrs. (Perdita), 243; *see also* Portraits
Rogers, Samuel, 264, 265
Rolliad, The, 237
Romney, Charles, Earl of, 286
— George, 180, 181, 193, 221, 239, 240, 260, 269, 270, 286, 361
Rosebery, Earl of, 329
Rothschild, Mr. Alfred de, 234
— Miss Alice de, 238, 267
— Baron, Ferdinand de, 159, 231
— Lord, 201, 202, 286
Rousseau, J. J., 192
Rowlandson, Thomas, 117
Royal Marriage Bill, the, 97
Royston, Lord, 41, 42
Russell, Jesse Watts, 300, 301
— John, R.A., 295
Rutland, Duke of, 185
— Charles, Duke of, 186, 332
Ruysdael, 300

St. James's Chronicle, The, earliest newspaper criticism of Gainsborough, 37; mentioned, 54, 66, 104, 153, 158, 191, 196, 198, 217, 218, 220, 224, 366
Salting, George, 394
Sandby, Paul, R.A., 221, 309, 358, 359
— William, *History of the Royal Academy of Arts*, 332
Schomberg, Dukes of, 81, 108
— House, Pall Mall, taken by Gainsborough, 107; history of, 108–112, 149, 150; first exhibition at, "A View of Mr. Gainsborough's Gallery," 226; sales of Gainsborough's pictures at, 319, 341
— Dr. Ralph, 52, 79; *see also* Portraits
Scotland, National Gallery of, 146, 149
Scots Magazine, The, 147
Scott, John, artists' colourman, of the Strand, 248
— Mr., portrait painter, and Mrs. Siddons's nose, 370
— Sir Walter, 108
Seguier, F. P., *Dictionary of Painters*, 335
— William, 273
Selwyn, George, 116
Seymour, Georgiana, 155

Seymour, Mr. Hugh F., 207
Shakespeare, William, portrait of, 61 ; statue of, 66
— Festival, the, at Stratford-on-Avon, 61, 66–69
— Gallery, the (Boydell's), 269, 270, 293
Shee, Sir Martin Archer, *P.*R.A., 217
Shelburne, Lord, Gainsborough visits, 384 ; *see also* Portraits
Shelley, Frances, Lady, Diary of, 155
Shenstone, William, *The Schoolmistress*, 157
Sheridan, Anne, 160
— Mrs. R. B. (Eliza Linley), busts of, 371 ; 390 ; *see also* Portraits
— Richard Brinsley, 129, 160, 303, 304, 309, 320, 322, 349, 368
— Thomas, 98, 99
Sherwin, J. K., 126, 306
Shield, William, 130
Shockerwick, Bath, 40
Shum, F., F.S.A., 31, 32, 35
Siddons, Mrs. Sarah, engaged by Garrick through Henry Bate, 136, 137 ; sits to Gainsborough, 236 ; mentioned, 76, 128, 223, 370 ; *see also* Portraits
Simpson, the oboe-player, 163
Sketchbooks, Gainsborough's, sale of, 351
Skirrow, Mr., buys *The Mall, St. James's Park*, 349
Smirke, Robert, R.A., 269
Smith, J. T., 26, 27, 50, 109, 247, 278, 330, 364, 371, 373, 376
Smollett, Tobias, *Humphry Clinker*, 48
Somerset House, the Royal Academy removes to, 161, 166 ; construction criticised, 221
Somerset House Gazette, The, 217
Somerville, William, 302
Sophia, Princess, 327
Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, Messrs., 183
Soward, Mr. A. W., C.B., 312
Spanish Ambassador, the, 249
Spence, the Rev. Joseph, *Polymetis*, 352
Spencer, Countess, 199
—— Earl, 199
Spender, Dr., of Bath, 31, 35
Spring Gardens, exhibition at, *see* Artists, The Incorporated Society of.
Squire, Mr. William Barclay, 105
Stephens, F. G., 69, 133, 134, 392
Sterne, Laurence, 280, 366
Stourhead, 43, 358
Stow, Mrs., 343
Stowe, 290
Stratford, The Hon. Thomas, 116, 141
Stratford-on-Avon, 44, 61, 66–69
Straub, Professor, 57
Strutt, Mr., 22
Stuart, Gilbert, 221, 266, 270
Stubbs, George, A.R.A., *Anatomy of the Horse*, 352
Sudbury, 1–5, 207–209, 297–300, 371
Suffolk Fund, 2
Sutherland, Duke of, 325

Tabley, Lord de (Sir John Leicester), 329
Talmage, Mr. John F., 178
Tarleton, Colonel, 181–183 ; *see also* Portraits
Taylor, Brook, *Perspective made Easy*, 18
— John, painter, 6, 7, 373
— John, amateur artist, of Bath, 85
— John, journalist, on Henry Bate, 129
Thicknesse, George, 12
— Philip, meets Gainsborough at Ipswich, 12 ; his story of the origin of "Tom Peartree," 15 ; with Gainsborough at Bath, 31 ; his character of Gainsborough in 1770, 71, 72 ; his quarrel with the artist, 99–101 ; financial difficulties, sells house at Bath and goes abroad, 102, 103 ; his story of the Duchess of Devonshire's portrait, 153 ; his connection and quarrel with Gainsborough Dupont, and his charge against Gainsborough, 337, 338 ; "a pest to society," 338 ; Bate ridicules his anecdotes of Gainsborough, 153, 361, 362 ; mentioned, 7, 8, 10, 11, 18, 30, 36, 45, 46, 50, 103, 104, 107, 115, 123, 190, 207, 208, 217, 225, 247, 310, 336–338, 361, 371
Thomson, James, *The Seasons*, 302
Thornbury, Walter, 245
Tickell, Richard, 368
Titian, 277 ; *The Blue Boy* painted in emulation of, 374

Tollemache, Mr., patron of Gainsborough, 262, 354
Tooke, John Horne, 99
Town and Country Magazine, The, 29
Townshend, Charles, 12
Tremlett, Mr., 383
Tresham, Henry, R.A., 113
Trimmer, Mr., 309
— Mrs. Sarah, 17
— the Rev. H. S., 245, 246
Trinity House, portraits at, 343, 344
Trusler, the Rev. Dr., 117, 134
Tunney, the Rev. J. R., 23, 24
Turner, J. M. W., R.A., 176, 245, 249
Tyrwhitt, Mr., buys Gainsborough's last landscape, 314

UDNEY, Mr., 279
Underwood, Thomas, 51–55, 69, 102
Universal Magazine, The, verses on Bradwell, 289
Universal Museum, The, 51
Upper Ossory, Earl of, 187, 277, 280

VANDERGUCHT, Benjamin, lawsuit with Desenfans, 276–280
Vandevelde, William, 252, 351
Vandyke, Sir Anthony, 62, 235, 249, 265, 266, 267, 306, 321, 322, 344, 351, 372
Varnish, and Lord Shelburne, 272; Gainsborough's "exquisite transparent," 331
Vauxhall, the affray at, 131
Velasquez, Gainsborough copies *The Conspirators*, 249; 250, 321
Victoria, Queen, 230
Victoria and Albert Museum, 27
Vitruvius, *see* Campbell.

WAAGEN, Dr., 376
Waddesdon Manor, fire at, 159
Walcot, Bath, 34
— Dr., 362
Waldegrave, Countess, 96; *see also* Portraits
Wales, The Prince of, his intrigue with Perdita Robinson, 180; owner of her full-length portrait by Gainsborough, 183; stratagem to secure Sir Joshua's vote for Fox, 219–221, 230, 258, 304, 394; *see also* Portraits and Landscapes
Wales, The Princess of, Dupont's portrait of, 344
Wallace Collection, the, 183
Walpole, Horace, criticisms of Gainsborough's pictures, 38, 150, 170, 176, 197, 199; on Gainsborough's first quarrel with the Academy, 95–97; examination of his statement concerning a portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire at the Exhibition of 1778, 150–152; his *Anecdotes of Painting in England* in Gainsborough's library, 352; mentioned, 21, 117, 168, 180, 230, 243, 271
Walton, Henry, pupil of Zoffani, 280
Ward, Edward Matthew, R.A., repairs Gainsborough's gravestone, 313
Wardle, Mr. F. D., Town Clerk of Bath, 34
War Office, the, at Schomberg House, 110
Watkins, Dr. John, *Life of Queen Charlotte*, 115
Watteau, 211, 226
Watts, G. F., R.A., 344
— Mr. David Pike, uncle of John Constable, R.A., owns Gainsborough's *Wood Scene, Village of Cornard*, 301
Webb, Daniel, 36
Weld, Mr., of Lulworth, 355
Wertheimer, Mr. Charles, 202
West, Benjamin, *P.*R.A., 113. 114, 215, 241, 265, 269, 277, 278, 280, 281, 309, 314
Westall, Richard, R.A., 269
Westminster, the connection of Gainsborough and Reynolds with the Parliamentary election of 1784, 219–221, 224, 225
— Hall, the trial of Warren Hastings in, 303, 304
Westminster Magazine, The, 87
Westmoreland, Lady, 36
Whitefoord, Caleb, buys three Gainsborough's for thirteen shillings, 347
Whitehall Evening Post, The, 214
Whitehall Evening Review, The, 281
Whitehead, William, 28
Wigstead, Mr., 315
Wilkie, Sir David, R.A., 347
William the Fourth (Prince William Henry), 177, 327

Williams, Gilly, 43
— John, *see* Pasquin, Anthony.
Willoughby de Eresby, Baroness (Lady Priscilla Burrell), 273
Wilson, Benjamin, his picture at Stratford-on-Avon, 66–69; bill for frame of Garrick's portrait, 67
— Richard, R.A., 68, 248, 370
Wiltshire, John, his story of Gainsborough's grey horse, 40
— Walter, of Bath, 39; his pictures by Gainsborough, 40
Windham, William, 8, 9
Windsor, 192, 230, 250, 328, 343, 348
Wolfe, Mr. T. Birch, 140, 299
Wood, John, architect at Bath, 48!
Wood, Robert, *Ruins of Baalbec*, 352
World, The, on Gainsborough and Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, 269, 270; attack on Bate and Gainsborough, 286–288; elegy on Gainsborough, 313
Wright, Joseph, A.R.A., of Derby, settles in Bath after Gainsborough's departure, 101, 102; 210, 221, 239, 240, 260, 269, 397
— Mrs. Phœbe, wax-modeller, 99
Wynants, Jan, 300

Yeo, Richard, R.A., 246
York, Frederick, Duke of, 197, 231, 290, 291, 322
Young, Arthur, 288
— John, engraver, his story of *The Blue Boy*, 375, 376

Zoffani, John, R.A., 45, 177, 254, 280, 344

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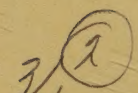

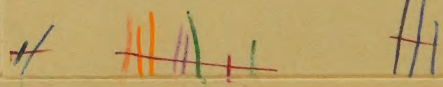

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